

THE
BRIDE'S BOOK
OF
BEAUTY



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MULK RAJ ANAND
&
KRISHNA HUTHEESING

KUTUB

'Good looks, good qualities, youth and grace are the chief and most natural means of making a person agreeable in the eyes of others. But in the absence of these a man or a woman should have resort to artificial means, to art...'

Vatsyanaa

PREFACE

This book has been a joy to write, for the hours which we have sat through eliciting information from our friends about the potions and perfumes and necklaces and stones which decked them from the tips of their heads to their painted feet is fresh in our minds. We recall the jokes and the pleasantries which greeted our first inquiries about the formulas of beauty, and the amazement which lit up the atmosphere when we pressed for details of closely guarded secrets.

If, then, this book gives the reader any of the joy we have had in writing it, our gratitude must go to the various Indian women who have helped in its making. For, without the great pains they took to be helpful by collecting recipes and dictating them to us, this book could never have been composed, as in our country the knowledge of Sringar, the laws of health and the rules of personal hygiene, have been handed down verbally from generation to generation and been adopted as customs and conventions, and very seldom written about since our ancient culture fell into decay. We feel that the appreciation of the well-being of the body is integral to any conception of civilisation. True that sometimes the emphasis on mere adornment and delectable food has been the sign of the decadence of a society, but this has only happened when a society has become obsessed with fine living for its own sake. We, therefore, offer no apologies for bringing philosophy from the study to the woman's boudoir, as to the kitchen in Mulk Raj Anand's Indian cookery book, for the concept of beauty and the good life is essential to the very idea of human dignity.

We are indebted to Lt. Col. Hem Raj Anand, I.M.S. and Mr. Homi Cooper for advice on the Latin names of various Indian medicinal plants, and to the various art collectors who have allowed us to reproduce plates in their possession.

Most of the prescriptions in this book can be dispensed at any chemist or herbalist. It may be advisable, in the case of the ancient Indian recipes, to consult a qualified doctor or chemist before making up a prescription.

M.R.A.
K.H.

**Ramday,
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antiquities Cover design executed by F. Baptista)





*'The stars and the tamburas mingle with the jingle of
bracelets and voice of melody of the fifth note.
All manners of beings peep and swing from all parts of
heaven which is resonant with the sweet bells of
dancing feet'*

ANON From the Hindi.

PART I



*'Too timid and too shy
She is ever averse to meet her lord,
She is called a Natodha or newly-wed by those
Learned and experienced in the lore of love'*

MOTIRAM in *Rasa Raj*.

THE BRIDE



LIKE everything else the ideal of female beauty has been defined in India in charming proverbs and aphorisms :

'Thy well-combed hair, thy splendid eyes with their arches curved almost to thine ear, thy rows of teeth entirely pure and regular, thy breasts adorned with beautiful flowers.'

'Thy body annointed with saffron and thy waist belt that puts the swans to shame.'

'Moon-faced, elephant-hipped, serpent-necked, antelope-footed, swan-waisted, lotus-eyed.'

The myth which unfolds the story of creation, about how woman came to be, is more decorative still.

Man was first created and woman next. And Brahma, the creator, fashioned the feminine form better than the masculine.

As for the process of creation itself, Brahma had finished making man and came to the moulding of woman. He discovered to his consternation that he had exhausted all the solid materials. Whether that happened by accident or design is not known. But it is well that it was so. For what use would solid man have had for a solid woman ?

Brahma, however, was very resourceful. He took the curve of the creepers outside his house, and gave woman her gracefulness of poise and carriage. Her breasts he modelled on the round moon, and he endowed them with the softness

of the parrot's bosom. To her eyes he gave the glance of the deer. On her complexion he imprinted the lightness of the spring leaves. He gave her arms the tapering finish of the elephant's trunk. Into her general make-up went the indescribably tender clinging of the tendrils, the trembling of the grass, the slenderness of the reeds. Then he swathed her whole form with the sweetness of honey and the fragrance of choru flowers. Her lips he treated with the essence of ambrosial nectar !

The actual life of woman in India has been less metaphorical and more sordid.

The old mud house in the village lies behind the gnarled trees of a grove, shrinking from a too living sun, seemingly the same today as yesterday and thousands of years ago. Strange growths oppress its riven sills, and across its carved wooden doors a spider weaves its web. Beyond the tall porch of the hall, beyond the men's room, across the huge, sunlit courtyard, shadowed by a verandah with pointed arches, supported by wooden pillars, stand the women's apartments, curtained off from the rest of the house by strips of coarse sackcloth and hiding dusky forms that glide to and fro, swathed in fine homespuns. The floors sag under the fall of heavy unshod feet. The walls and ceilings lift, here the mute prayer of a lady, spent and wrinkled, there the steady droning of the spinning wheel and the babble of many young voices.

Somewhere in the dark chambers is heard the wailing chant of a young bride. She is beautiful or she is plain, but she has made the best of those gifts that life has bestowed on her, through a simple toilet the rules of which have come down as habit from generation to generation. She does this *sringar* because it is a part of a ritual which almost every woman practises. As a girl she was not allowed to embellish her charms overmuch. And, consequently, there is a certain

self-consciousness in her attempt to adorn herself, a self-consciousness accentuated by her desire to shine and the fear of a mother-in-law only too insistent on the demands of duty and responsibility and dictating rules of conduct about everything, about beauty and love and marriage, about all the inflated ideals of womanhood in India.

Endless were the considerations which governed her marriage, religious, social, philosophical and astrological. All the ingenuity of priests exercised itself in discovering a man whose horoscope revealed potentialities which tallied with the scroll of her fate. Worldliness could not have exerted itself more than in her parents' choice of the bridegroom.

For months, preparations for the marriage had been going on. At length the day had arrived when the sacred ceremony was to be performed. From early dawn, throughout the morning and the afternoon, the ritual of the bride's toilet had proceeded with slow and deliberate care, all the interminable details of the process of adornment, the ablutions in medicated waters, the anointment of the body with scented oils, cosmetics and unguents; the plaiting of the hair and the weaving of it in patterns, adorning it with ornaments of gold and flowers, the adorning of the parting of the hair with *sindhur*, the oxide of mercury, the rubbing of various fards on the face and the use of powders compounded of various scented ingredients; the imprinting of marks on the forehead, the painting of moles on the chin, the application of collyrium to the eyes; the tinting of hands and feet with henna; and the last little touches of perfume.

After the performance of intricate ceremonies to the tune of holy chants, this doll had entered the home of her mother-in-law.

There life had unfolded some of its implications to her. She had sought the beauty and ecstasy of union and had realised its difficulties and despairs. And then gradually

she had accepted the daily round, given forth sons who were expected of her, till in her own turn she had become a mother-in-law.

Obviously, woman in India has sometimes been exalted as a goddess, but mostly pampered as a doll or kept down and oppressed.

During the earliest known period of Indian history, the Dravidian, for instance, woman is, like woman in the contemporaneous Aegean civilisation, worshipped as the Divine Mother, symbolising the entire universe. She is the nymph who comes up on the rocks to dry her long sea-green hair, she is the spirit of the trees in the forest, the sylph, the fairy, and the soul of the earth in its rich, ripe fertility, playing with satyrs and fauns and others of her kin, in the cool, starlit nights and heavy pensive days.

From the survival in some parts of India today of primitive societies, it is possible to understand the position of woman at a time when there was no joint family hut 'gens', consisting of those known to be of common descent on the mother's side. The prevalence of matrilinear descent under primitive communism points to the kinship of our culture of that time with the culture of other early classless societies, when there was no private property and no slavery. Under the 'gens', a man was considered a close relation of his sister's son, but not of his own son, because in this kind of society the mother is known, though the identity of the father is in doubt. The various gentes constitute the tribe, and if a 'gens' becomes too large, it splits into various daughter gentes. The chief characteristic, of the 'gens', deriving from the common ownership of everything, is a primitive democracy: every member of the 'gens' has the right to take part in the discussion of gentile matters and to vote.

We do not know for how many years, for a thousand or two thousand, or only for a hundred, woman thus reigned as

the symbol of all that is free. But we do know that, even during times of which we can reckon the dates, she survived, the beloved of men, the adored. For, the so called 'Aryans', who invaded India about two millenia before the birth of Christ, not only brought with them an idea (curious in nomads and yet quite natural to them, since wanderers long for mates and learn to respect them because they cannot get them), of 'the tenderness which a husband has for his wife,' and 'the faith which a wife has in her husband' And they accepted wholesale the entire sum of that magnificent culture which the Dravidians had perfected long before the Aryans entered India.

The later hymns of the *Rig-Veda* and the whole collection of the three other *Vedas*, the *Sama*, the *Yajur* and the *Atharva*, tinged as they are with all kinds of influences which the Aryans encountered during their prolonged journeyings, reflect a very high place for woman. She is the goddess, the counterpart of God, the form through which energy finds expression. She is 'OM,' the mystic logos, the word or speech or sound, the spouse of the creator, in unison with whom, and through whom, the creator accomplishes his creation. She is *Aditi*, the symbol of the whole world of nature, the 'common mother of gods and men'

Not only is she the embodiment of the poet's dream, the seer's fancy, but she is accorded a high place in the ordinary social life of the community. The marriage service for instance, performed after *swayamvara*, the free choice by the bride of a bridegroom, defines the terms of a very honourable contract. Look at the final benediction pronounced by the priest to her and her husband. 'Remain here, do not depart, but pass your lives together, happy in your home, playing with your children and grand-children..... O generous Indra, make her fortunate! May she have a beautiful family, may she give her husband ten children! May he himself be like an elephant!'

The husband's greetings are more cordial still :

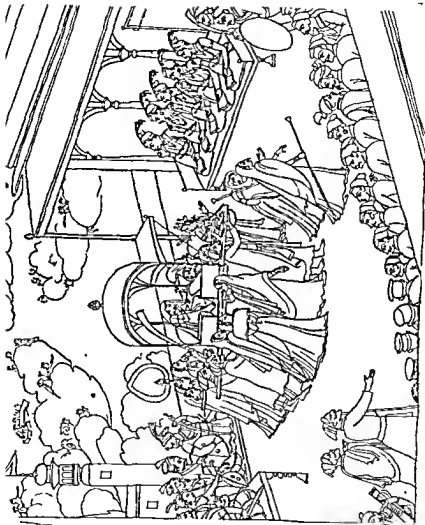
'I take thy right hand as a pledge for our happiness ; I wish thee to become my wife and to grow old with me : the gods gave thee to me to rule over our house together. May the head of creation grant us a numerous race , may Aryaman prolong our life. Enter under happy auspices the conjugal home. May there be happiness in our home for both humans and animals. . . . Come, O desired one, beautiful one with the tender heart, with the charming look, good towards thine husband, kind towards animals, destined to bring forth heroes '

'Here may delight be done through wealth and progeny. Give this house thy watchful care. May man and beast increase and prosper. Free from the evil eye, not lacking wedded love, bring good luck even to the fourfooted beasts, thou gentle of mind, bright of countenance, bearing heroes, honouring the gods, dispenser of joy. Live with thy husband and in old age mayest thou still rule thy household. Remain here now, never to depart, enjoy the full measure to thy years playing with sons and grand-sons. Be glad of heart within thy house.'

It would seem that woman in this age was a responsible partner in the human marriage, in no sense subservient to, or dependent on, the will of man, specially as we learn that she could, on her own initiative or jointly with man, perform the sacred rites, read the holy books and write them.

But this Elysian state of affairs was not to last long. The twilight of the gods had come to India with the emergence of the priesthood and the social and religious laws of their invention.

The rules of society are made for ordinary men by extraordinary men.



The priest has, in all ages and in all societies, either been the extraordinary man or has assumed the functions of one. He is usually the wise old man of the community, whose varied experience of life fits him to guard the minds of the young, to cure physical disease by giving charms and casting spells, and to heal the soul when it is suffering from divine discontent. Sometimes, however, he presumes to keep 'society' in check and to control its search for the mystery of life without possessing the credentials of the medicine man.

But whether he be a real priest or not, his guardianship of mystery gives him a power over men which he guards jealously.

Now woman has, also, in all civilisations, been the custodian of a mystery, of a mystery as secret and as beautiful (if it is not, indeed, more beautiful, because it can be realised in the here and the now, in the flesh and the blood) as the mystery to which the priest holds the key. Naturally the priest is intensely jealous of woman.

During the time of the elaboration of the caste system, life was becoming less and less an adventure with the nereids and nymphs and dim iridescent apparitions, capricious and wanton like all the subtle urges of the human heart, and more and more like a set scheme with a well-defined goal in God. The old men of the community, the priests, were responsible for this fixed order. With a remarkably penetrative insight and subtle guile, they foresaw the danger of the disintegration of 'Aryan' youth in its dallying with Dravidian thought. They had already sought to organise the race into four castes, through the years of their conflict with the indigenous peoples, arrogating to themselves, of course, the highest position, giving to the advance guard of the tribe the two places of warrior and merchant next in the hierarchy, and condemning the dark-skinned natives to the fourth and lowest class. The killing of

a priest was, the Gods declared, the one unforgivable sin anyone could commit, and the punishment to be meted out to a person who reviled a Brahmin was 'to have his shoulder blades smitten off, to be flayed alive, his flesh cut in pieces, and be slain by a hundred pointed thunderbolt.'

Having thus consolidated their power, they set about to curtail the power of woman who, whether as the subtle image of desire in life, or in her various disguises in art, seemed to lead men astray.

They secured the limitation of woman's power even as they invented the four-fold scheme of life. during the first stage of youth, man was to devote himself to his education, observing strictly the vows of celibacy and temperance; then he was to marry and live a disciplined life of the senses, later, he was to withdraw from the world, shun all desire, and seek oneness with the Infinite which the priests had appointed; and finally he might await death and the new life that was to begin beyond the funeral pyre

Woman was thus alienated from man. For the puritanical injunction which requires man to shun all desire, cuts at the very root of marriage, giving a degrading sense of inferiority to the relations between husband and wife, and exalting the value of a 'pure' spirituality leading to a fixed goal, a dead end

Woman, the Mother, it is often said in justification of this era, still remains as the last vestige of an idealism that is almost lost to us.

But consider the degradation of the wife.

Manu, a priest and law-giver, is the villain of the piece, for he, as the spokesman of the Brahmins, has definitely and forever forged shackles of slavery for the women of India.

A woman, he says, is to regard her husband 'as her god.' She is to realise her soul through him. 'If a wife obeys, her husband, she will, for this alone, be exalted in heaven.' She is not to perform any sacred ceremony herself. Should she do so she will not be blessed with any heavenly rewards.

He hesitates a little to see if he cannot be a little benevolent about it all. The capitulations of his intellect are clouded for a while by the sensuous memories of the pleasures he has had in woman. He recalls her winsome little face, bathed in smiles, her inviting presence. And he says that she should, of course, 'be honoured with gifts of flowers and ornaments.' He becomes kinder still when he lends himself to contemplation, for, like all Hindus, has he not a mother-complex? 'A spiritual teacher,' he says, 'exceeds a worldly teacher a hundred times, a father exceeds a spiritual teacher a hundred times, but a mother exceeds a spiritual teacher one thousand times a father's claim to honour on the part of a child as its educator.' And now he has melted and indulges in the most generous sentiments. 'Wherever women are honoured, there the divinities are pleased, but when they are not honoured, there all religious worship is fruitless.'

But while offering all this vague and insincere adulation and flattery, he has deprived woman of all her influence, spiritual and material, by asserting that she must, on no account, act for her own pleasure, but should always depend upon the bounty of her nearest male relative in all things. He has even snatched away from her the purse with which she was entrusted.

A man may marry freely a woman of his own caste, and he may take a second wife of a lower caste. But a woman is to obtain the consent of her father or brother, except when she is marrying a warrior.

A man of thirty may marry a girl of twelve or a man of twenty-four a girl of eight.

A man can repudiate a wife for almost any reason, provided that he waits one year before repudiating her.

A man may marry again if his wife 'plagued him, wasted his money, was diseased, drank, opposed him or was sinful.'

A barren wife may be removed eight years after marriage; a woman who bears female children alone may be replaced eleven years after marriage, or a mother whose children have all died, after ten years, but a widow cannot re-marry.

A man may correct a misguided wife by striking her with a cord or a bamboo cane, though our sage doubts 'the efficacy of such procedure', and prohibits a blow 'on any noble part'.

A man may choose and select a beautiful wife but a woman is to have no choice. 'Let him who marries avoid such families as neglect religious rites, have no mates, which possess not the *Vedas*, whose members are hairy, have piles, are afflicted with consumption, dyspepsia, epilepsy, leprosy.' Let a man 'not marry a fawny maiden, or one without hair, or one with too much, or a chatter-box, or one red-eyed, or one called after a star, tree or river, a bird, snake or slave, or one with a terrifying name' 'Let him marry a well-formed woman with a lucky name, who walks like a swan or an elephant, with slender locks and teeth and a soft body.'

A more diabolical code of priest-made laws with regard to woman cannot be imagined. But the priests did not have it quite their own way for some considerable time. Freed from the contingencies of the wars of conquest, the younger members of the tribe turned bards and minstrels and thought out a philosophico-poetic ethics of their own in the *Upanishads*, and enshrined their chivalry in two enormous epopees, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

The position of woman in the works of these warriors turned sages is on a par with the best traditions of all nations of antiquity.

As Gargi, the wife of the philosopher Yajnavalkya, a woman is the author of some of the profoundest dialectic in the *Upanishads*. As Savitri, she is the symbol of true love who, choosing a mate even though she knows he is doomed to die prematurely, rescues him from the very clutches of the God of Death by her dogged devotion and loyalty. As Gandhari, Draupadi, Damyanti, she is the symbol of fidelity, living up to an ideal not imposed on her by men, but freely adopted. As Sita, she is the model wife, who is implored by the sages to occupy the throne of her husband, Rama, on the eve of his enforced exile, for 'of all those that marry, the wife is the soul,' but she chooses to follow Rama to exile instead.

This whole literature is charged with the spirit of an ethic which has nothing to do with the arid logic of Manu's categorical imperatives. 'Consumed by the troubles of the soul,' says the poet of the *Ramayana*, 'afflicted by reverses, men seek pure delight in their wives, as creatures suffering from heat find it in the freshness of water.' It is a literature of chivalry *par excellence*, full of chance phrases like this: 'Even in thy anger, O hero, beware of ill-treating a woman.'

But, not only is the insensate love without motives a little beyond mere human happiness, the priests are jealous that men find the reality of their lives on the breasts of women and not in their holy books. So we find that in the later portions of the vast mass of folk-lore that composes the Epics, the very excess of virtue practised by men overshoots the limits of humanism, and the priestcraft begin to belch forth their tainted breath again. Kausalya, the mother of Rama, wishes, for instance, to show the steadfastness of her love for her husband by burning herself on his funeral pyre. The Pandits, ever-ready to exploit an opportunity which gave them a chance to



*' Let us fly the kites of love, sister,
And meet in the blue empyrean....'*

PAJARI Folk Song

issue injunctions, define the faithful woman's words into a law: 'She who voluntarily burns herself with the deceased husband,' they say, 'will reside in Swarag (heaven) for as many thousands of years as there are hairs on the human body.'

This is perhaps too obvious an example of priestly infamy. They were usually far too subtle and artful, and their guile is, unfortunately, hidden forever in the pages of a too dry-as-dust history. But if we untie a knot or two of the thoughts that lie buried in their texts, we shall see how often they invented a law, hypocritically proclaiming it to be in the interests of society at large, when all the time it was a convenient subterfuge to satisfy their own ends.

The poet of the *Rig-Veda* had sung of woman as 'the bearer of heroes', 'the mother of many sons.' The Brahmins made that the basis of another kind of declaration altogether: 'a son is another self, a spouse is a friend, but a daughter is a source of affliction' Add to this the new priestly dictate that only a son can perform the funeral rites of a father if the soul of the deceased is to avoid the awkwardness of continual transmigration and quickly to soar to heaven, and you can see how the priestcraft have legitimised a feeling which resulted later in centuries of female infanticide.

Since sons were wanted, according to the priests, and sons' sons to help their parents and grandparents to make a short cut to salvation, it is conceivable that it was deemed better to secure them as early as possible. This necessitated the practice of child-marriage.

But when a young bride entered a joint family, (already prescribed by Manu to all men), and had to observe the law of obedience to every member of the new household, male or female, who happened to be older than her, she had hardly any chance of developing a sense of responsibility or inde-

pendence. In fact, she was doomed to die in childbirth. That would give the priests another occasion to enjoy the rich gratuities and sumptuous feasts which they had enjoined every good Hindu to offer them at every marriage if they walked the path of true *dharma* or religion. So the custom of child-marriage was encouraged until it became deeply rooted in the race.

The idea of *Karma*, originated by the Dravidians, that man goes through the cycle of birth and rebirth according to the reward he has earned by the performance of good or bad deeds in the universe, is beautiful and majestic in its quaint naivete and ultimate profundity. The Brahmins made it terrible when, among the other implications they drew from it, they interpreted it to confirm the low status they had already assigned to woman: woman was weak, therefore she was inferior, therefore she must have done bad deeds in the past life to have been born a woman.

The tender humanism of the Buddha was a revolt against the priestcraft, against the stodgy compilers of ponderous codes and heavy ceremonial texts. And, for a while, woman was liberated from the stifling atmosphere in which she had become imprisoned. But Buddhism is not a positive way of life. It is essentially a negative teaching, preparing man for death and the final release from the trammels of existence. The Enlightened One's puritanical prescriptions for the living of a monastic life, free from desire, for both men and women, was no boon to the vast majority of people seeking, with all the weakness of the flesh, a little happiness in this world. He had, however, realised the spirit of life by the love, the pity, the tenderness he showed to every being on earth in view of the inevitability of death. His message was forgotten soon, but the world changed, nevertheless, after him.

For there followed now what is known in Indian history as the classical renaissance. It lasted about four hundred

years, but what these four centuries saw of beauty has deservedly earned the period the appellation of a golden age.

It was an age which knew of the passionate and tremulous emotions that lie at the root of life. It was an age which had bathed in the sparkling dark river of life. And it lived in the awareness of this life, freely, with a freedom controlled only by itself, and by no alien sanction or authority.

This age has poured forth a wonderful stream of poetry in praise of woman. Could any woman be more beautiful than the gentle and innocent girls of Kalidasa's poems, perfumed with the rarest scents, garlanded with choice flowers, ornamented with necklaces that dally with their breasts, and jewels that gleam in their dark and amber hair, and waistbands of pearls that shine with the swaying of the wine jars of their thighs? Look at the gracious Sakuntala, for instance, whose only mission in life seems to be to let herself be adored; look at her definition of the ideal love. 'The wife,' she says, 'is an object of honour in the house, it is she who rears the children. The bride is the breath of love to her husband, and she is all devotion to her love. She is the half of man, the best of his friends, the source of well-being, wealth and happiness, the root of the family and of its perpetuity... Sweet-spoken wives are even partners in joy, ministering helpers in hours of sorrow or sickness. Men who have wives accomplish well the sacred ceremonies and fulfil the duties of the head of the house... Such men are filled with joy and the happiness of salvation is assured to them. Wives are friends in the wilderness, giving consolation by their gentle discourse, they are like fathers in the serious duties of life, they become like mothers in times of distress. Whoever has a wife is sure of support; that is why wives offer the best refuge in life.' 'Marriage,' she says further, 'is a union in which a soul unites itself by love to another; a soul finds refuge in another; a soul gives itself to another.'

This age enshrined woman in endless beautiful stances in stone and marble at Sanchi and Amravati. And it revealed, with splendid gaiety, the knowledge of beauty and the human body in interminable scenes of abandon in the ecstasy of music and dance.

This age showed the passionate flame of a woman's body revelling in desire in all the most brilliant harmonies of colour at Ajanta and Bagh.

To think of this age through its art is to visualise a world full of the loveliest creatures, with great eyes filled with fiery passion, soft, deep, alluring and magnetic, with something of humility, something of pride about them, clothed in marvelous clinging draperies of changing colours and glittering sequins, languorous or sportive, reading, writing, painting, dancing, acting, every movement of their limbs vibrant with life.

The festive procession of drums and flutes, of wedding songs and flowered chariots rolled round, however, for many a day, not unaccompanied by sorrow—relieved at this time by a tender regard for frailty and old age, sickness and want.

About the eleventh century A.D., however, the classical view of woman was further perverted by the series of invasions from the North. It was somewhat the same kind of thing as happened in Europe to the Mediaeval view of woman, which was mainly a humanised paganism, through the Reformation.

The Indians shrank back into the shell of orthodoxy in the face of foreign conquest. All the complicated precautions, the jealousies, the throbings of the heart which the invaders occasioned, led to the adoption of *purdah*—seclusion of woman, of infant marriage and polygamy.

It is a pity, however, that the Hindu women could not benefit from the *Koran*, which made generous allowances to the wife, by giving her inalienable rights to hold property, to

sell it or mortgage it, to seek divorce at her will, to re-marry after divorce and to re-marry after widowhood.

Unlike the European woman, who began to react against the low status that came to be assigned to her after Luther by the formulation of an ideal of woman as the equal of man, complete by herself, mistress of her own sex and free to use it as she likes, to accept or to refuse motherhood, the Indian woman merely drifted along and became bound to man, more and more as a slave, less and less as an individual apart.

Love, in the form of the romantic impulse, so dominant a feature of the classical age, became taboo to her except in rare cases ; love only as the relationship of the sexes to beget a child was recognised as valid—the duty to the unborn, to the inheritor of the traditions of the race, the tie of fatherhood and motherhood.

The Brahmins again succeeded in exterminating the primordial instinct for the development of erotic personality among men and women

From this reduction of woman to the status of a slave, bound and fecund for the service of the hearth, the courtesan benefited greatly, as in the Greece of the fourth century and in the Rome of the Empire. For, as the wife was merely the servant, the courtesan was the ideal of romance. Fortunately, however, the courtesan had been in India, since remote antiquity, not like the modern street woman, a fallen creature and an outcast, but the custodian of a tradition of music and dance and love, the accomplished actress, the inspirer of poets, sculptors and painters, the friend of kings to whom she gave good counsel in peace, and armies of men, elephants and horses in war.

Confined to a narrow and cheerless round of domestic existence, with priest-made laws and injunctions governing her, the Indian wife would have been in a sad plight



if there had not survived in life some vestige of the beautiful poetry of myth and fantasy through which the poets had expressed the content of their emotional strivings about her.

Outside the cities of the Gangetic delta, in the villages, and particularly in the fastnesses of the hills of Rajputana, where the warrior class was strongest, the exalted poetry of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* was still being sung and

a new religio-romantic literature was growing up. Here, it seems, piety and devotion, with its insistence on chastity and purity, did not exclude free love of the sort for which the knights of European legend had fought. For, a monarch like Prithvi Raj, who battled against the invaders, had also fought for the hand of his mistress like the knights of the *Ring* or like a romantic troubadour. The woman he fought for was also a knight, virtuously withdrawing, but not incapable of declaring her love, not as charming and sensuous as her classical predecessors, but gentle, upright and modest, true to her love. In the person of the beautiful Padmini, the Queen of Chitore, who battled for her honour against Ala-ud-Din, the king of Delhi, and burnt herself alive rather than yield when the flower of Rajput chivalry had sacrificed itself for her, the woman of this age redeems what she has lost in status.

But, in spite of the deeds of these Rajput women, priestly orthodoxy spread its tentacles throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan as the invasions lasted, and the system of making offerings to the Brahmins for the atonement of bad deeds and the appeasement of the gods remained firmly established.

A number of selfless men like Ramanuja, Nanak, Nam Dev, Tuka Ram, Kabir, who shared a feeling in common with men like Dante and St. Francis of Assisi, sought generally to remove the evils of Hinduism, and particularly to alleviate the lot of women. But they were obstructed by the twin forces of an alien government and stereotyped orthodoxy in their efforts for reform.

From now on, the condition of the women of India became not unlike that of a person lingering on a sick bed, who is not too unhappy about it. There is little to redeem her from the deadliness of existence, from feeding priests, making offerings and keeping fasts. Except that when she spends hours over her toilet, bathing in milk, painting her lips, polishing her nails,

perfuming her hair, powdering her breasts, firmly believing it is for the father of her children, man concedes her liberty and respects the bearer of his children with the reverence he would pay to his own mother. If she is happy, she doesn't mind solitude and seclusion and considers her work as a religious duty. In fact, she would shut herself behind locked doors and give him the key. She is willing to satisfy all his claims upon her. And he appreciates it by submitting to all those ceremonies under cover of which she seeks to beautify the home life. And, at times, he is the most docile, the most willing, the most obedient, even the most henpecked, of husbands.

Occasionally, the very spirit of a richer time inspires her to break the shackles of slavery that enchain her, and she emerges a saint, like Mirabai, who revolted against convention and went her own way to find truth in life, or Chand Bibi, who fought against Akbar the Great Mogul. And then men bow before her, even priests and emperors. They awaken to her potentialities and stir themselves out of their convenient torpor and apathy. 'It is a strange commentary on the magnanimity of men,' said Akbar, noticing that widows were being forced to immolate themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands, 'that they should seek their deliverance through the self-sacrifice of their wives.' And men listened to reason and willingly submitted themselves to the law that made forcible widow-burning illegal.

But perverse attitudes about the most vital things, once established, have a way of persisting, specially as the sanctions of the church and the laws of the state are too often divorced from life. An individual like Akbar could say that the love of woman is the fairest of all things, but when it came to life, he could forbid his son, the poet-prince Selim, to marry Nur Jehan. The Emperor Shah Jehan built a wonderful mausoleum to cover the remains of his dead wife; his son, the fanatical Aurangzeb, condemned his own daughter to death because her love for a general was not in the interests of the state.

And the British officials of the modern Indian Government have, probably, all loved and honoured their wives (or at least, pretended to do so, though the suffragette movement in England excited the contempt of many an Anglo-Indian!), but they have been altogether blind to the lot of women in India.

With the social and religious life of the peoples of India, the British professed to have no concern. The Christian missionaries, who alone interested themselves in the lives of the people, were handicapped by the fact that they belonged to a nation which had brought to India, not the cross of peace, but the sword of war. Besides, in regard to their work for women, their attitude was considerably influenced by the doctrine of original sin. Indian woman with the unconscious nudity of her soft, brown body, was to them the very image of devilishness and carnality.

The bureaucracy, of course, knew it to be in its interests that the evils which gnawed at the roots of Indian life should flourish and weaken the people it exploited, rather than be eradicated and thus lead to a strengthening of the forces of discontent that already showed signs of conscious endeavour.

The immolation of widows had been legally abolished in 1852 after the heroic struggle of Raja Ram Mohan Roy to move the British Government to a realisation of the horror attaching to that rite. But child-marriage, purdah, the joint family and caste have remained in actual practice for want of legal support in the campaign to remove them.

The story of Indian effort to persuade the bureaucracy to declare child-marriage illegal is in this connection significant.

As early as the year 1866 when a Parsi reformer, Behramji Malabari, was agitating against early marriage, the state refused to interfere, in terms which went to define the following pompous but lame excuse: 'In the competition between legis-

lation on one hand and caste and custom on the other...the legislature should not place itself in direct antagonism to social opinion.'

Since social opinion was the thing sought to be changed, a paradoxical policy was perpetuated, and urged as a prop against all agitators, from Madhava Rao who urged a reform in 1888 to Sir Hari Singh Gour in 1915 who proposed the raising of the marriageable age to fourteen for girls and sixteen for boys.

After a whole series of bills about child-marriage had been blocked by authority in wanton ignorance of the stifled cries of thousands of child-widows, an age of consent bill was passed after an arduous struggle against the Government, fixing the marriageable age at thirteen.

Vital public opinion was still unsatisfied 'Time and again this Government stands in the way of progress,' said Srinivasa Iyengar, a prominent member of the Legislative Assembly. And this charge was substantiated by the official opposition put up to the *Hindu Child-marriage Restraint Bill*, introduced in 1927 by Harbilas Sarda, which proposed to decree all marriage of girls under fourteen invalid. The Government chose to appoint an *Age of Consent Committee* to tour all over India and to inquire how the law, passed in 1935, had worked. This inquiry, protracted over two years, gave the orthodox interests time to rally against the Bill, and on the Committee's report being presented in 1929 the Bill was passed in a diluted form, making child-marriage under fourteen not invalid, but merely punishable by a fine of rupees one thousand or a maximum penalty of one month's imprisonment in default.

The law is a dreary thing, old and ossified, and while it persists in its blind attitudes, life changes and shows itself in the newest and strangest of colours.

The sparks that were kindled by the reformers I have mentioned above have burgeoned in contemporary India into a weirdly powerful flame. The last few years have witnessed the remarkable phenomenon of thousands of women, hitherto secluded, slothful and fashioned for ungirt ease, go forth into the world without a veil, individually and in processions, demonstrating against the forces that have kept them down, braving ruthless oppression, undaunted, a spirit in their heaving breasts, in their flashing eyes and streaming black hair, that derived from an invincible belief in struggle.

As we gaze on them with bated breath and a half-expressed sigh of admiration, we recall that it was thus the women guards of Chandra Gupta went forth from the embraces of their lovers to war; we are haunted by vague memories of the days when no chains bound their feet and they went about free as the air. And is it an echo-augury? we ask, when we hear them announce:

'We have awakened from a long rest, from too long a sleep, to a realisation of our actual needs. Awakened womanhood is determined to undo the wrongs of the ages, in short, to bring about the real renaissance and regeneration of India.'

This resolve was declared at a meeting of the All-India Women's Conference to discuss women's rights to education, suffrage and the organisation of social work. The spirit of emulation that lies behind it is noticeable throughout the manifestos issued at the Annual Sessions of this society, which is linked by sub-committees all over the country. 'We women,' they say, 'have realised that all our differences of caste and creed and race should sink in an attempt to achieve a common purpose, in our efforts to better the conditions of our sisters. And they have passed other resolutions, which show their recognition of the practical issues involved. They unanimously demand, for instance, the development of maternity and child-welfare work; the securing of facilities for industrial training for women; they ask for inquiries, with



*O Paragon of women! Thy waist was
 Too slender and curved even at thy birth
 It's now a vanishing line what with Thy
 Heavy breasts! It's now come to be fragile
 Like the tree on the bank of a gushing stream
 That has washed all earth from its roots away*

*Kama has wanton made Thy golden breasts
 Hard so that they might tear Thy bodice, and
 Expose Thy arm-pits. But, he could not harm
 Thy waist; for it's safe bound by three cardamom lines.*

~NANKARACHARIAR in *Sundarādhārā*

a view to bettering the conditions of women and children, into the working of labour in mining areas; they seek to establish centres for the training of social workers; they urge the abolition of prostitution and the prevention of the sale of illicit drugs, they draw attention to the insanitary conditions of cities; they urge the abolition of castes and community designations from the official census; they demand free primary education for girls and a host of other useful reforms.

But to bring about vital changes in the social life of the community which women demand is required a change of order. Hedged in, as India is at every turn, by the intransigent spirit of a multitude of headless and heartless forces, it has also to contend with the febrile emotions aroused by the wholesale influx of the cheaper impulses of European art and culture. The impact of a new idea of romantic love, which is neither duty nor responsibility, nor even desire, but something inexplicable, unknown and undefined save in the pages of the bad European novels, has threatened to sweep the youth of India off its feet. Educated neither to know the truth about their own culture, nor to appreciate the deeper impulses of modernity, woman in India has almost lost her heart to the Hollywood actress rolling up her stockings.

The genius of India, however, dynamic, expanding and assimilative at the core, though it seems static on the surface, can be trusted to glide over the first flush of a merely flippant romanticism, and to ask itself the meaning of love and define *a sense of values* suited to the new institutions it will accept.

It seems to me that if we bravely face the changes which are implicit in the social and cultural forces of our time, our impulses will undergo a change too, and a new way of life will gradually arise that will not be the less human for all the radical departures from our present mode of living to a new sense of values that it might entail. Perhaps man will discover more of himself than he has ever done in the past. He will discover the real human relationships, because he will

have seen through the subterfuges of priest-made religion, discarded the second illusions of convention, because he will have seen life face to face, shed hypocrisy, mastered himself and his environment.

The function of a woman as a child-bearer, and the psychological states attendant upon it, can hardly be affected by a change of social order, and sex will remain the very reality of all instincts.

But the insistence of the interests on the race which has always been an important consideration in every social organisation, need not blind man into exploiting woman or being exploited by her. The incompatibilities between man and woman, for instance, which are smothered up in India because of the practical difficulties which prevent bringing matters to a crisis, will have to be faced when both husband and wife are economically independent. The institution of marriage might become more honest. Certainly, experimentation before marriage may come to be recognised as necessary for the achievement of polarity. And if marriage be considered a healthy relationship because, at its best, it conduces to a higher degree of self-respect, the economic independence of the individuals who marry and their awareness of the fact that they have come together in the interests of an ideal, the ideal love, will assuredly give them a greater sense of companionship. And when both husband and wife know that if they make things difficult for each other, they can part without economic disaster, and that the marriage and divorce laws normally present no bar to separation though they may take strong account of the interests of the children, they will neither condemn themselves to miserable lives of complaint and bitterness, nor be too willing to part for trivial disagreements.

It is possible also that the future will make for the recognition of the equality of woman with man. And the extension of opportunities for useful work to women is sure to prove

that though woman is the equal of man she is also different from him ; that she is other than man ; that she is the bearer of children while he only plants the seed ; that she has snow mounds of breasts to his strong chest ; that she has round hips and tapering thighs where man has well-strung, finely taut muscles ; that she has lips that are used to receive as man's to give ; that she feels more through her sensibility and lives in the deep, unquiet silences of her soul while man senses the pleasure and pain of the moment but dreams of a stilled rapture, and that precisely because of all their temperamental differences they complete each other. But these physiological differences must not be used by men to deny woman equality of opportunity, for woman is able, except for brief periods before and after pregnancy, to do all the jobs that a man can do and does not stand in any need of patronage from men

Woman has, of course, from times immemorial, in all countries of the world, played an important part in the economic life of the community. But after work there comes leisure, the time for cultivating beauty and dignity. And unless the pleasure principle, which is the core of all life, becomes taboo under some new kind of fascist slavery, there is no reason to believe that woman will depart from femininity and cease to decorate herself with all those subtle arts and devices which embellish her person, give her a sense of dignity and which make her, eternally, the object of desire, partner of man in the procreation and maintenance of the race, the guardian of posterity.





'She teaches me all her secrets, that it is better to soak our cheeks in snow water, that the powdered root of lemon grass brightens our teeth, that nothing is better than the juice of green strawberries to ripen our breasts ; but not the secret of that charm which shines through her like the lustre of the pearls on her body.'

AMARU, 8th cent. A.D.

BEAUTY AND THE MIND

A highly mental people and richly sensuous, the ancient Hindus insisted upon having their sensuality refined with thought.

It is one of the cardinal principles of health which they elaborated, that there is no dividing line in human personality between the mind and the body. The slightest and the subtlest characters of the mind of a person, they say, are registered on his or her countenance. The mind is body and the body mind.

That being so, they suggest to those who seek to cultivate beauty, to cultivate a beautiful soul

To cultivate a beautiful soul is to live in defiance of all that is drab in life.

That involves the need to know oneself and one's surroundings. It should be possible for us, for instance, to see those subtle and inexplicable urges in the darkness of our



nature that incline us to relish the colour of a wild flower, the shape of a graceful body and the tenderness of a lover's feeling. For, if we are capable of doing that, we are in a position to understand our ever-changing experience, cultivate poise, accept the beautiful and discard the ugly. It is a continual struggle, of course, to be thus always taking stock of the world and our emotions about it. But the mental tension of poetic misery, what is called 'divine discontent', is a state which, perhaps, best symbolises what is called happiness.

In certain people, one of the two extremes of our nature, the body or the mind, is unduly emphasised.

The Buddha, for instance, (and Jesus), rejected the hot, feverish, agitated life of the body and achieved a sensitivity which could weep to see the plough furrow through the ground.

The philosopher Shankaracharya stressed the mind so much as to regard matter as mere illusion.

The king-sage, Bhartihari, insisted on the two extremes, alternately. He retired to a monastery after living a life of complete abandon and became a saint, but he reverted to the wild pleasures from his hermitage, returning thither again, however, to practice asceticism; and he always had a horse ready saddled for him, outside his cell, because he did not know when he would feel one or the other of his extreme urges.

The dangers of this extremism are lessened, say the ancient books, by straining after balance or equilibrium.

But the actual process of Indian life has been different. The bulk of our peasantry has lived an instinctive unconscious and semi-conscious life, even though the controlling function of reason was allowed the highest place, except when it was over-zealous in repressing and suppressing the flow of our feelings, especially the tender and delicate shoots that lie at the roots of life in the sub-human peace of our pre-natal experience.

The moral codes were mostly discounted by the people of India, except when the laws laid down were convenient or forcibly imposed. The people accepted, for instance, such virtues as the Buddha preached : kindness, generosity, gentleness, the avoidance of anger, hate, pride, jealousy, sour temper ; and they were forced to accept piety. But the general feeling behind life, as it was actually lived, has been that life is an experience, both good and evil, which we must go through willingly, since we ourselves have made it by our good and bad deeds and because it is experience.

And they gave themselves up to the thrills and raptures of all their animal-vegetable impulses; they lent themselves to all the rumours and abandonments of silent ecstasies and riotous living; they mingled with the delicate and sensuous emotions of the heart the subtleties of the head; they felt life deeply and they saw it whole.

Their best folk art and literature suggests the hidden curves of unclassified experience. They seem to stride forth, in their painting and sculpture and poetry, exultantly, dancing, conscious of the physical delight of moving their legs, conscious of the sun overhead, the earth under their feet, of the whole enchanted atmosphere, abandoned to dreams which are earthly and yet not of the earth. It is a magical deliciousness in which a mother suckling a child, lovers clasping each other, and a sick man on the verge of death, are accepted with a tender awareness of the floating and fluctuating quality of evanescent moods.

The gay, eventful and precarious ways of life, which are the lot of busy 'householders', therefore, naturally conduce to rich and vital impulses, and there is an emphasis on this world, on the here and now, in our folk culture, which gives the lie to the idea that we were always a people intent on release from the trammels of existence. In fact, we are as natural, as sensuous a people by tradition and temperament as any in the world.

However, the habit of *Yoga*, contemplation, is recommended, the cultivation of moods in which we become conscious of all the subtlest and the most elusive states of our being. It is a state often unconsciously experienced in tranquillity and repose, in the still darkness of the night, or during odd moments of the day, when the mind suddenly becomes wrapt in thought, meditation or introspection. There is little more to it than an encouragement to indulge in the luxury of deep, sustained thought, so as to plumb the depths of the psyche.

There are numerous pictures in the history of Indian art which show ladies, with their dimples marked by forgotten smiles, lost in trances or praying for the gift of beauty that will make their attainment of union with their beloveds more easy. Or they are idle, or languid with too much sleep. And there is a fairly frequent abandon to the exigencies of the senses and to deep thought in the older, leisurely, aristocratic civilisation. Therefore, to know the potency of the prayers



that these women breathe to gain more beauty and to win true love, is needed an imagination which does not shy or go through quivers of self-consciousness at the spectacle of mere delight in living, the beauty and the pagan ecstasy of it.

For, when a woman can show the mirror to her body so that it may freely praise the velvet gloss of her skin, estimate its softness by a long caress, so that it may test the fullness of her breasts, the firmness of her belly, so that it may kiss the fire on her lips, the light in her eyes and the sheen upon her hair, then does that emotion possess her which, tearing her between pride and wonder, certainty and impatience, makes her wish with all the concentrated fury of an obsession for a more generous portion of the gifts that are already hers.

The passions do not end there. The marble beauties that are stanced in graceful poses upon pedestals of stone in the temples of India betoken an idolatry that was as much art as worship. But, of course, it requires a sensibility devoid of puritanism and prudery, limpid as a child's, to realise from the sculpture and paint the simple and sublime pretexts of beauty elaborated by fancy.

'Thy hair is like a swarm of bees hanging on a tree. The hot wind of the South penetrates it with the dew of love-battles and of the wet perfume of night flowers.'

'Thine eyes are like lilac water-lilies without stalks, motionless upon the pools'

'Thy lips are two delicate flowers stained with the blood of a roc.'

'Thy tongue is the bloody dagger that has made the wound of thy mouth.'

'Thine arms are tapering as two ivory tusks, and thine armpits are two mouths'

*'Thy thighs are two white elephant's trunks. They bear
thy feet like the two redflowers.'*

*'Thy breasts are two silver buckles with cusps steeped in
blood.'*

*'Thy navel is a deep pit in a desert of red sand, thy belly
a young kid lying on its mother's breasts.'*

Such are the garlands of song that have been offered to
idols of beauty and no one can deny that there is an inspiring
sensuality in this worship.

If a woman, it is said in a *Tantra*, abandons herself often
enough to the dreams that spring from the heart, a mood will
be engendered in her which will, in its inchoate, insatiate
beauty, colour the whole of her person. Isn't it one of the
commonest of common places of conversation that in moments
of intellectual or emotional excitement the features of the
plainest people assume an aspect of exquisite beauty: 'Love
transfigures a homely girl's countenance with a glow of angelic
loveliness'

It is the same thing which the poet Bhartuhari has ren-
dered in more beautiful language:

*In restless brow and twinkle of the eye,
In smiling modesty and gentle tones,
In graceful gait and posture, woman owns
A beauty parlour and an armoury.'*

But this is not to be interpreted as a mere encourage-
ment to superficiality. The ideal thing is to cultivate the
sensibility, to achieve awareness. There is an insistence on

poise in our civilisation which is the opposite of the furious, agitated, nervous hysteria of modern life and points the way towards a full and dignified living.



*' The vital feelings of delight of the youthful damsel
find appropriate expression in the pleasure of the
Swing Hindola*

*Swelled with elation like a shrub is this damsel of sixteen
swinging to and fro..*

*Says Padumakar Each push sends her jangling, which
fills the air with the music of her girdle **

From the Hindi of PADUMAKAR, Mediaeval Period





*'The glowing blush that mantles the cheek,
The dazzling fire that sparkles from the eyes,
The soft, shining sheen of the wavy hair
Are all mere expressions of good health.'*

TANTRAS, 500 A.D.

BEAUTY AND HEALTH

IF it is true for the Hindus that to beautify the mind is to beautify the body, the converse of it is equally true for them, that to beautify the body is to beautify the soul. And they do not hold the perverse attitude of pruders and puritans who consider the desire for the cultivation of physical beauty as something shameful and superficial. The art of make up is enjoined to be practised as a ritual by the philosophers of love, and even the plainest women adorn themselves and do not resign themselves to their fate with the comfortless observation: 'Either you are beautiful or you are not, and there is the end of it.'

The vast majority of the women of India live, freely and unrestrained, the quick life of the open, bathing in the forest streams, working in the fresh air and sunshine and sleeping on hard string beds after a strenuous day's work. The unfortunate urban women ought to take a lesson from their rural sisters.

The influence of nature not being discredited by any 'warnings to hikers,' we find many an alluring and colourful line in India's literary lore which portrays for us beauty in its sportive and active moods. In a woman's walk is found the same majestic, yet lithe and graceful rhythm as in the steps of a swan. In the pranks of a young maiden is the charm of a deer when it leaps playfully across a jungle stream. An alert

woman, with the pearls of her necklaces sporting on her heavy breasts, is compared to a sloping hill with a sunlit cascade coursing around and down its sides.

The various texts on the art of mime advise women to study these and other movements of animals, if they seek to attain symmetry and proportion in their bodies and grace and suppleness in their walk. The peacock is held up as a model in this respect, as also the cypress swaying, and the flexible weeping willow.

The true poetry of movement, it is said in the books of *Hatha-Yoga*, physical culture, lies in the art of walking, and the benefits accruing from that exercise are recorded in details which would be excessively boring if they were not catalogues of immense utility. 'Swing out with arms and legs and hold your head up as you walk and make your road the highway to beauty!' says one text. 'Stand erect,' runs another, 'when sitting, relax your body and feel at rest. In all forms of movement express grace and charm. Remember this when going across a room, when sitting down, when eating, remember it in every action. In all things keep your head tilted upwards, the curve of your mouth upwards, and the whole poise of your body upwards. It will become a habit.'

⌋ Sleep is generally classified as of four kinds

1) Tired nature's sweet restorer, in which the eyes close as soon as the head rests on the pillow, and sleep steals through the senses, all the still hours of the night pass in the twinkling of an eye, and we awake, feeling refreshed by the grace of slumber. It is the reward of the weary, not of the overtired or exhausted.

2) 'Dreamless sleep, is a sweet careless sleep and invigorating, but we feel as if we have been in bed a long time.

3) 'Dream sleep, in which the heart roves unfettered towards repressed desires, in which the shadow of the day's distress follows in a frenzy of remembered pain and we arise not very refreshed as the unconscious has been active.

4) 'Uneasy doze, in which we are aware of what goes on around us, a drugged stupor when the impressions of our senses reach the brain, though in a sluggish manner.'

It is enjoined that one should sleep as much as possible, for sleep is a 'magic potion' and one emerges from it like a rose revived with fresh, cold water.'

'Drink nature's own nectar in preference to milk,' is a familiar saying. And the necessity of abundant draughts of water is implicit in it. The old Indian medical books insist on its efficacy as a blood-purifier, for it increases the gastric juices, stimulates the liver and washes the alimentary tract free from the impurities collected there during the passage and fermentation of food

'Don't satisfy your hunger altogether,' is another proverb. And the ancient cookery books invoke the voice of nature to decide the quality and quantity of food which one should eat in the interests of health. The general rule is that if the body is well-exercised and working efficiently a person should feel hungry and should eat, but not too much. If the system is disturbed in any way, fasting is enjoined as a very efficacious remedy. Regularity of meals is insisted upon; and there is nothing more injurious to digestion, according to the Ayur-Vedic system of medicine, than hurried or irregular eating.

'The water and food of different climates differ,' says Kliema, the editor of a classical cookery book. 'One should study that.' To apply this truth to our exigencies it may be said that the modern early breakfast corresponding to the Indian first light meal, of fruit juice, or the first cup of tea, is very well suited to the tropics. A salad lunch with one heavy

dish corresponding to the peasant's solid and substantial midday meal, gives just the necessary heaviness for the afternoon sleep or siesta, which is strongly recommended in warm climates. The English idea of afternoon tea is excellent, if it only means a cup of tea and not all the excess of sandwiches and pastries. A light dinner is good, and the glass of warm milk before retiring to bed necessary, to build up the body.

The Indian systems of medicine trace all the ills of the body to irregularities in the functioning of the bowels. Fasting and an occasional purgative are highly recommended.

'When the foundation of good health has been laid by making most of sunshine, fresh air, sleep, water and food,' says Vatsayana, 'it will be time to turn to the little details about the care of the complexion, the hair, the teeth, the nails.'





*'Get thee a skin of exquisite texture,
of a soft and delicate bloom, and a
complexion pure and clear.'*

YOGA SUTRA, 2nd cent. A.D.

THE COMPLEXION

AN unhealthy skin was considered the greatest menace to beauty in India from the current magical formulas specifically designed to guard against personal disfigurement. Even now, the dread of skin diseases is so acute that most sufferers from it are regarded as untouchables.

The appearance of the skin is supposed to depend on two opposite factors—translucency and opacity. Skin that lacks translucency is a dull and muddy, wanting in that beautiful lustre, brilliancy and sheen which is so characteristic of health. Skin that wants opacity, though it has lustre, is deficient in bodily strength, being of a pale, waxy hue, giving one the idea of a film of some transparent varnish spread evenly and in an extremely thin layer over its surface. The truly healthy skin maintains a natural balance between these two opposites.

The balance can be adjusted by artificial methods. The use of powders, for instance, increases the opacity of the upper layers of the skin. All powders are opaque, as may be judged by taking a piece of the most transparent glass and grinding it fine, very fine, for it will be a snow-like powder absolutely impervious to the rays of light. It is because of this opacity that powder looks so much better at a distance.

The translucency of the skin is not so easily achieved, because the best way to secure it is by the use of greasy com-

ounds, and grease seems unpleasant when applied to the skin. If grease is removed after it has been rubbed and worked into the skin, it imparts a softness, translucency and an al like sheen which seems to delight the poets. As Chaurasaid in the 3rd Century.

*'Even now
She is present to me on her bed
Balmed with the exhalation of a flattering musk,
Rich with the curdy essence of sandal.'*

But the appearance of the skin depends on the weather. In the winter it seems to get drier and drier ; in the summer it looks oilier and oilier. It is no use correcting the greasiness of the skin by loading more and more powder on to it, for, according to the Hindus, the treatment is more of an internal than external nature. Excessive excretion from the fatty glands indicates that the diet is at fault and that the internal machinery is not functioning properly. This may be regulated by a vegetable and fruit diet and by 'eating the fresh air,' as they say in India.

The renewal of the face is, however, necessary even when the system is working properly.

The ideal face is 'a golden oval,' says the poet Kalidasa. And there is a vague feeling crystallised in popular belief that the smaller the face of a person relatively to his or her head, the more highly refined is the person from the point of view of cultural heredity. Whether that belief is the statement of a law of universal significance or not, the average Indian mother-in-law always wants to choose a dainty-faced bride for her son. And the elaborate ornaments with which women decorate their faces in India all seem calculated to make the face look small and delicate.

The fine art of cleaning the face in India knows not the word, soap. For soap, though long known, has seldom been

used in our country with the frequency with which it is used in Europe, because it is supposed to be very irritating and harmful to the skin. Oil and fatty substances have been freely used as more adequately suited to clean the complexion, especially when made into fards by mixing with various kinds of flours. Also, such substances easily lend themselves to massage, which is preferred because thereby the horny layers of the skin are removed, the surface formed, the wide hair-channels distributed all over the body, lined, the blood supply of the parts massaged increased. *Upatanas*, as most of these alternatives to soap are called, remove dust, and are unparalleled for cleaning the skin and softening it.

The simplest of them is a thick paste made by mixing a quarter ounce of gram flour, oatmeal or ordinary white flour with a tea-spoonful of mustard or olive oil. It should be rubbed slowly with the palms of the hands on to the face, and in a circular friction and pincement on the cheeks, and in an up and down movement on the forehead with the tips of the fingers, as lightly as possible. The paste will dry and fall off in bits after having extracted all the excretions from the pores of the skin. The face should then be washed and dried thoroughly with a soft towel. After this, a little lanoline cream or fresh cream of boiled milk may be rubbed well in, and the face massaged thoroughly. The cream should then be washed off with warm or hot water. A little rose-water may be applied with equal parts of boiled water, finally, to impart a pleasing fragrance to the face.

Another fard may be made as follows. Take a pound of bran or oatmeal and a quarter of starch. Put them in a flannel, calico or butter muslin bag. Pour boiling water over the mixture. When it is cool, squeeze the water out and use it as a wash rag. The starch will be left as a fine, impalpable powder on the skin, whitening it.

An ointment made by mixing equal portions of the *talliennoe* (*chalmogro oil*) *montana coronaria*, the *costus*

speciosus (pushkara) *arachis* (ground nut) and the *flacourtia cataphracta* (*talispatri*) is specially recommended by the sage Vatsayana as an unguent.

Also, an ointment made by mixing equal portions of the oil of hogweed, the *echites frutescens* (saiwa plant), the yellow amaranth, and the leaf of the nymphae, is suggested in the *Kama-Sutra*. And another ointment which Vatsayana mentions is composed of equal parts of the powder of the *nelubium speciosum* (the white lotus) the *mesua roxburghii* (*nagakeshar*) clarified butter, honey, *talicunoe* (*chalmoogra oil*), *montana coronaria* and the *cantho-chymus pictorius*.

The value of olive oil as a skin food, for fattening, feeding, and keeping the skin unlined, cannot be over emphasised. In the South, oil baths are regularly taken. This should be practised by everyone. There are two methods of having an oil bath : One, which is usual, is to massage the body with warm oil. Leave it soaking for a few minutes. Rub off before the bath with sandal wood powder or gram flour. The second form of oil bath, and particularly suitable for dry skins, is as follows : Lie in hot water or pour warm water over you, as hot as you can stand it, and then rub the body gently with a loofah or pumice stone which removes all the dry skin. Now massage the body with warm oil. Wash off in the bath, taking care not to use soap at any stage.

To apply olive oil effectively, the pores of the skin should first be opened with a wash in very hot water. Then olive oil should be smeared all over the skin and rubbed well in with a piece of cotton wool or just with the palms of the hand. All the dirt will be removed in this way and the skin will be left clean and fresh. Plenty of cold water should then be sprinkled and the body rubbed dry with a towel.

A good treatment for the face is an egg pack given once in ten days. Take the yolk of an egg. Mix it with a few



drops of lemon juice. Wash the face and apply the mixture over the face and the neck. Wait till it dries and rub off gently with a rough towel.

A thorough massage with the peel of an orange, lemon or cucumber is a well-known Indian method for cleansing the skin.

A simple mixture of grease and water was used as a cold cream in ancient India, as well as a more complex preparation derived from the mixture of equal parts of almond oil, white wax, spermaceti, rose water, and a few drops of the otto of rose or of the otto of almonds. But it is difficult to make good cold cream at home and it should be bought ready made at the chemist's. The English theatrical cream is the best modern cleanser.

An ordinary white powder of wheat starch and orris root was made in ancient India, also the starches of pistachio nut, rice, potatoes, talc, magnesite, chalk, zinc, bismuth.

A liquid white, used by the Indian itinerant actors, is made as follows: Take a part of rose water and an ounce of the oxide of bismuth. Add a few grains of yellow ochre to take away the blue-whiteness of the bismuth.

A teaspoonful of this should be enough for the face and the neck. To apply it effectively, put it on a piece of cotton or cotton wool and smear it on the face. Let it dry there. Then take a towel soaked in water or a sponge and rub it on the skin to remove the inequalities of the white. It has to be very skilfully done not to be detected.

The juice of plums, of the cactus fruit, beetroot and ripe strawberries was used, besides the pink colour of nuts and chalk, for rouge, in India. A convenient way to impart a glow to the face was to rub a gold coin on the face.

A toilet lotion is made in India as follows : Take four handfuls of bean flowers, three-quarters of a pint of lemon water, six ounces of lily roots, an ounce of gum arabic and tragacanth. Distil them all together and apply the essence to the face when desired. It will leave the cheeks the shade of roses.

Another beautifying lotion may be made by soaking two ounces of dried rose-leaves in a pint of white vinegar for a week. Then strain and add a pint of rose water to the liquid. It may be used by diluting it with four to five times its bulk in water.

• For a flushed face a thin paste of milk and flour should be rubbed on the face at night, before going to bed

To preserve the fine texture and brilliancy of the skin when it is being exposed to the sun, the cold wind or heat, a cream may be made by mixing two ounces of cocoa butter, two ounces of lanoline, two and a half ounces of rose water, and one and a half ounces of elder flower water

✓ To remove spots and shadows Take a lemon and squeeze it in a cup. Soak about three grains of turmeric in it and leave it to dry in the sun Then mix it with four grains of the essence of green marrow, and white mustard, the powdered dry skin of an orange, each eight grains. Lastly, add quarter pint of sheep's milk Make small pills of the paste about the size of a gooseberry Mix a pill every morning with curdled milk and rub it on the face Wash the face half an hour later A week or two's treatment will be found to cure the skin and make it bloom.

Another treatment suggested by the author of *Ananga Ranga*, is to 'levigate the red ochre, silicate of alumine and oxide of iron, the Indian madder, *butea frondosa* (*palaha*) and turmeric, each of equal proportion, in the juice of the plantain tree'

✓ And, according to the same sage, 'he, who, having pounded the sesame, the two kinds of cummin seeds and white mustard in milk, besmears (her face with it) for a week, would remove the black spots, and her face would become snow-like.'

To cure wrinkles and whiten the skin : Soak a towel in warm water, squeeze it and put it on the face for an hour before going to bed. Or, take half a cupful of cream or pure milk, add a drop of benzoin, enough rice flour to make a paste, and rub it on the face.

Or, take about ten ounces of rose water, add a quarter ounce of tincture of toon, drop by drop, and five drops of the otto of roses. Then shake the bottle. Dab the mixture on to the face with a small pad of cotton wool, after washing and before retiring at night. Use liberally and allow it to dry on.

Or, take 60 grams of alum, one and a half ounces of almond milk and six ounces of rose water. Dissolve the alum in the rose water, then pour slowly into the almond milk, stirring constantly the while. Bottle and use when needed.

To remove blackheads : Bathe the skin in hot water, massage the skin gently with a mud pack. Wash the face when the pack dries and squeeze out the blackheads with the fingers, very carefully so as not to hurt the skin. Bathe the skin with two drops of peroxide of hydrogen diluted in the water. To avoid the recurrence of blackheads the diet should contain plenty of fruit and vegetable. The bowels should be regulated, indigestion avoided, and sweet and starchy foods should be cut.

A very dry skin is very often due to the lack of vitamin A in the system. A course of shark's liver oil or vitamin A pills is recommended. For an excessively dry skin, which in some cases even cracks and becomes painful, a doctor should be consulted who may advise on a thyroid treatment, for this condition is often due to the faulty working of the thyroid gland.

To purify the blood and to remove pimples: Rub the leaves of the *Azadirachta Indica* (*Margosa* or *Neem tree*) with a pestle in a mortar, adding water while pounding. Strain the liquid through a muslin cloth and drink the essence in doses of two tablespoonfuls a day, till cured.

Or, soak and filter *Surertia Chiretta* (*Bhuniba*) through a muslin cloth and bottle. Put a teaspoonful of honey into an ounce of the mixture and drink. Afterwards eat plenty of fattening stuff. In winter, the liquid should be boiled and drunk in small doses of an ounce.

Or, boil two pounds of carrots in half a pint of water. Filter the liquid into a bottle and drink a tumblerful of this infusion every morning.

There are three remedies for the removal of pimples suggested by the author of *Ananga Ranga*

'By the application of *Acorus Calamus*, (*Vacha*) *Symplocos Racemosa* and rice, the pimples on the face of men and women, appearing in their budding youth, would disappear in three days.

'One should besmear one's face with the thorns of *Bomba Malabaricum* (*Silk cotton tree*) pounded in milk—then the pimples would disappear

'By the application of *Symplocos Racemosa*, hay salt, white mustard and *Acorus Calamus*, (*Vacha*) the pimples disappear gradually.'

To remove warts and moles on the face. Take an ounce of dried sage leaves, an ounce of dried tops of rosemary, an ounce of dried lavender flower, a few cloves, a dram of camphor, and one and a half parts of diluted vinegar. Allow the ingredients to steep for a fortnight. Then filter through filter paper, and bottle. Apply the liquid to the moles three times a day, allowing it to dry, till the disfiguring spots are removed

To remove sunburns, chaps, redness and harshness of the skin take four small cucumbers. Cut them into fine slices leaving the rind on. Place the slices in a basin containing four ounces of olive oil. Strain through a piece of muslin, allowing plenty of time for the oil laden with cucumber to trickle through. As the flow of the oil grows less, the muslin containing the cucumbers should be squeezed and the process kept up until the cucumbers are left, fully drained of their essence, which contains a very efficacious medicinal property.

To remove freckles : Buttermilk is used in India, but not if the skin has a tendency to superfluous hair.

An excellent prevention against freckles is a cream made by boiling an ounce of sweet cream in eight ounces of new milk, an ounce of lemon juice, and an ounce of alum. When boiled, skim the cream and use when required

The juice of ripe strawberries, unripe grape juice and emulsion of bitter almonds may also be applied to cure freckles.

Honey as a beautifier has a very old reputation in India, as also the white of an egg. Mix an ounce of honey with three ounces of ground barley and the white of an egg into a paste. Spread it at night all over the face. Wash it off in the morning with tepid water. Continue till the skin emerges with a radiant hue

Beauty masks in the form of mud packs were used in India as early as the time of the Buddha. A kind of yellow clay, Gachni, was smeared on the skin in the hot days of summer to relieve the body of its heat. This and other mud packs, specially fuller's earth, can be bought at any grocer's or chemist's. Mud packs are not very attractive to look at, and when smeared on the skin, make one look like the ugly ghost of one's ordinary self, but they are a splendid tonic for the complexion ; they stimulate the flow of the blood and smooth away the lines of fatigue.



*'If you love God, take your mirror between your hands
and look
How beautiful are your breasts with their two russet
berries.
At sight of them, stricken, drunken, I cannot make a
distinction
Between them and white roses beaten in white snow
How beautiful are your breasts with their two russet
berries.'*

From the Turkish, 19th cent

To apply the mud pack, the face must first be washed with hot water thoroughly, so that the pores of the skin are open for the mask to take its proper effect.

The mud, which has already been soaked in a tiny basin, should then be applied thickly over the skin, and allowed to remain on for about twenty minutes, as you sit quietly with closed eyes, in an arm-chair.

The layer of mud will then begin to tighten and crack, making the skin tingle somewhat as the blood-vessels are stimulated by the mask. It should now be removed by wiping it off gently with a towel wrung out in warm water.

A little cream may be applied and wiped off slowly. It will leave a tender bloom on the complexion. Masking should not be made a habit. But undertaken now and then, particularly before a special occasion, it is wonderfully refreshing and beautifying.

As noted above it may also be employed on parts of the face to cure blackheads and enlarged pores.

If the skin tends to become rough after masking, massage it with the fard of oatmeal and olive oil before and after the treatment with mud.

A rub over with a piece of ice or a sprinkle with cold water will always be found refreshing after this treatment.

The author of the *Ananga Ranga* suggests various fards for bracing up the breasts.

'*Physalis fletuosa*, (*Ashwagandha*) *acornus colamus*, (*Vacha*), *saussurea articulata* (*Kushda*) long pepper, *Nerium odorum* all equal portions, and a few cloves levigated with butter-milk—by their application a woman can make her shrivelled breasts large.

'The kernel of the seeds of *zizphus jujuba nerium odorum*, mixed with fat in equal parts, massaged, make the breasts of woman attain compactness.

'By the application of gengelly oil in which has been boiled the juice of *Gmelina Arborea* (*Shriparni*) even the fallen breasts of a woman become compact and elevated

'Constant massage with mustard oil in which has been boiled the paste of pomegranate rind would make the breasts of a woman compact and very attractive.'

'Oil extracted from the sesum, clarified butter prepared from cow's milk, the juice of *calotropis gigantea* (*Arka*), all in equal parts, *sida cordifolia* (*Bala*), *Echites frutescens* (*Sariva*) the three hot substances, and *mimosa pudica* (*Lajjala*) the paste of these an expert should cook on slow fire. By its application, the shrivelled breasts of a woman quickly grow firm

'And if a maiden take this oil with rice gruel, her full and elevated breasts would never fall'

One of the greatest merits of Indian civilisation is that it enjoins a compulsory daily bath to every man and woman. And, of course, every religious and social ceremonial begins with ablutions.

Apart from the ordinary water bath, milk baths are practised. A gallon of milk should be sufficient for a bath to make the skin glossy and white as milk.

But if milk be too expensive a luxury, bran and starch in a bag, boiled in the water with which you are going to take your bath, may be used as a substitute. It is equally potent for softening and whitening the body.

After the bath, an effective massage is suggested in India as a refreshing tonic for the skin.

The soap used in ordinary water baths are made at home in India to secure pure and unalloyed cleansers.

A good toilet soap may be made as follows: Take two ounces of sweet almonds, two ounces of bitter almonds, three ounces of fat, one ounce of the oil of almonds. Heat the ingredients over a slow fire in a pan. Stir well and cool. Then make small cakes of the stew.

Another excellent soap may be made in the same way, with five ounces of fat, two ounces of sweet almonds, one ounce of white wax, three ounces of the essence of roses.

Dried rosemary may be substituted for soap to advantage. Also, bread soaked in plain vinegar cleanses far more effectively than anything else, especially when mixed with powdered lemon peel or orange peel and bran, which, besides being hygienic, give a pleasing fragrance.

A gentle friction with myrrh, frankincense or any oil will tighten the skin, make the flesh silken and soft and perfume it for the day





' Like the white buds of tuberoses in a dark night through the lines of betel shone out her white teeth.'

DILSOZ, 18th century.

THE MOUTH AND THE TEETH

EVERY person in India is ceremonially required to wash his mouth four times a day: on getting up in the morning; during the bath; in the afternoon; and before going to bed at night. In addition to this, there is the conventional washing of the mouth before and after every meal. The pearly white teeth of our people do not, therefore, shine by accident but by design.

The twigs of the *Kikar* and *Neem* trees are chosen as the best suited medicinally for the purpose of chewing into the shape of fresh brushes. The European tooth brush was considered a highly undesirable innovation, because, unless kept in a disinfectant, it soon became the refuge of germs, while each twig made into a brush is discarded immediately after it has been used and has the advantage, besides, of being bent or broken in the middle, like a bow, to scrape the tongue as far back as its roots.

Besides the twigs, various powders are also freely used in India for cleaning the teeth, treating the gums and removing the dried saliva (tartar) and stains of food from the surface of the teeth and the spaces between them. We mention a few.

A convenient and highly efficacious powder is made from charcoal ground fine, very fine. It will whiten the teeth and make them shine as few other preparations do. It has, besides, the advantage over ordinary tooth powders that it cleans

them without injuring the enamel and takes away any offensive taste or smell from the mouth. A little powdered black pepper may be added to it. It will act as a disinfectant.

Another easily prepared powder may be made by mixing two ounces of powdered cuttle fish bone, both shell and the soft inner portion, one ounce of raw powdered areca nuts and five ounces of powdered charcoal. The mixture may be perfumed with a few drops of the essence of roses or any other fragrance desired.

A very excellent tooth powder may be made by mixing three ounces of chalk with half an ounce of camphor.

Another good powder is a mixture of two ounces of precipitated chalk; one ounce of borax; half an ounce of myrrh; half an ounce of orris root.

The charcoal of *kikar* wood powdered and mixed with salt and black powdered pepper is recommended to people who have a tendency to pyorrhea.

The shell of almonds, ground and mixed with salt and black pepper, is an excellent tooth powder for general use.

A variation of the last may be made by mixing one drachm of camphor, an ounce of lump sugar and an ounce of dry blanched almonds, first into a paste, then into an emulsion by gradually adding a pint of distilled water.

To cure blisters in the mouth: take the black soot from the back of a griddle and add to it an ounce of powdered dried mushrooms. Sprinkle the mouth with a little of the mixture. Or rub some shelled almonds on a clean slab of stone, adding drops of water the while. Apply the liquid to the blisters.

To strengthen the gums if they suffer through general debility and want of a tonic, mix an ounce of prepared chalk, half an ounce of myrrh, a teaspoonful of camphor, half an ounce of powdered borax. Use this instead of the ordinary tooth powder.

If the gums be spongy, soft or liable to bleed, the following mixture will be found alleviating: one teaspoonful of the tincture of myrrh, one teaspoonful of the tincture of bark, two ounces of rose water. Apply it to the teeth twice a day.

All these powders are best applied on a finger. The finger should be passed along the teeth and the gums. After a vigorous massage of the front teeth and the gums, the finger should be taken as far as it can go to the inside, and the process should be repeated gently, for the skin inside the mouth is very tender.

It is advisable for those who are used to a meat diet and have to take suddenly to an easily digestible vegetable diet, to guard against erosion of the teeth by well masticating a biscuit with tea in the early morning and to wash the mouth copiously with cold water.

A soft voice like 'the cooing of the she-herons' is the ideal tone ascribed by the poets to women. To prevent hoarseness, Indian women cook equal parts of figs and apricots with the same quantity of sugar, and when it is reduced to jam, they dry it in the sun and eat it like a sweetmeat. Figs, water cresses, melons, honey, raw eggs and barley water are also suggested to make the voice strong and clear. Or charcoal lozenges may be made by mixing equal parts of coffee or chocolate and vegetable charcoal, into a paste with powdered gum. Mulathi and beetle leaf, orris root, cloves, cardamums are used as ceremonial offerings to visitors in Indian homes, because they impart a pleasing flavour to the mouth, besides being disinfectants.





'Her lips which are the cups of red flowers.'

KALIDAS, 4th cent. A.D.

THE LIPS

TO appreciate the full point of the comparison of the flowers with the lips, one must have seen the young shoots of the mango taking off from the bough in a double curve, while the blossom grows in tiny, spear-like pyramids, often compared to the darts of the god of love.

It is said in India that a woman's character can be discerned from the shape of her lips. Thick lips betray a nature, pleasure loving and luxurious, with an inclination to extreme sensuality. Thin lips denote a cold, reserved nature, hard in its outlook, with little interest in its dealings with other people. Very thin lips, which are compressed, signify a cruel nature, and a positive passion for inflicting pain. When one lip is thin and the other thick (it is more often the lower), we find a mixture of love and hate, generosity and cruelty, extreme kindness and hardness. The ideal lips are neither too thick, nor too thin; they make the mouth look as if it is cut from a large ruby.

It is possible to regulate one's lips to this norm. If they are too thin they can be improved by frequent suction and pulling them outwards as if kissing. They may also be treated with rose water, or pure olive oil during the day, and anointed with a well-prepared mixture of ten grains of red pepper, 1 dram of simple cerate, four drops of the essential oil of cinnamon. If they are inclined to be thick, they can be tightened by practising silence which is, incidentally, the best way to cultivate equipoise.

The shell of green walnuts and the bark of the walnut tree seem to have been used in India since very ancient times to clean the teeth as well as to secure a permanent redness of the

lips. For, as early as the first century B.C., we find a poetess singing :

' I rose and broke a branch of dadali and reddened my lips with the sap.'

Lemon has also been used freely to colour the lips. It is advised, however, not to use this if the lips are cracked.

Lips crack when the air is dry, or when a person has been speaking for a long time, or by mouth breathing. It may be prevented by applying a mixture of two ounces of the oil of almonds, half an ounce of pure white wax, two ounces of Rose water. The almond oil and white wax should be heated together gently and coloured with eighteen grains of alkanet chips tied in a piece of coarse muslin, till the mixture is a deep pink. Then remove the alkanet bag and add the rose water. Thoroughly stir and mix the ingredients together with a silver spoon, till it is nearly cold.

Another healing remedy is a mixture of one ounce of honey, half an ounce of litharge, half an ounce of myrrh, perfumed with a drop or two of the otto of roses

Still another useful application is a mixture made of one ounce of wax, one ounce of almond oil, ten drops of the solution of carmine, two drops of the otto of roses.





'Oh ! Leila !

*In your eyes are three things,
Black diamonds of Hindustan,
Figure silks of Lahore,
Flames of Fuss-Yama ;
The mountain flames are their brightness
The figured silks of Lahore their dusk,
The black diamonds of Hindustan
their colour,
Oh ! Leila !*

SONG OF NEPAL

THE EYES

THE Indian poet always longs to sink 'in the depths below depths of the eyes of his beloved.' And most of his similes about eyes are drawn from nature. They are like the 'narcissus', the 'almonds', the 'lily', or 'like fishes with their long, flashing glide.'

A morning bath being a popular habit in India, and the sprinkling of the eyes with cold water being a necessity on account of the dust and the heat, grit and the other secretions are removed without any medicinal applications. But there is an excellent powder, *Surma*, the sulphuret of antimony, obtainable at all chemists, which has been used in India from times immemorial both to brighten and strengthen the eyes, and to darken the eyelashes.

A silver or ivory slide, or a fine camel-hair brush, should be dipped in the antimony, and passed along the borders of the lids with a light and gentle hand, taking care, however, to carry the line of shading a trifle deeper into and beyond the angle of the eyes. This will cleanse the eyes and give them a large almond shape, delightful to look at especially in artificial light

For redness and irritation of the eyelids, it is suggested to paint the lids with the cream skimmed off milk. This will also leave them dark as violets of a delicate ocean blue.

An old Indian medicinal remedy for this is to mix the following: *Mercurous Chlor (Kushlapara)* 1 dr., *Zinc oxide (Kushlagist)* 6 dr., *Ammonium Chloride (Nashadar)* 1 dr. The powder should be used either by means of an ivory or silver slide or dusted into the eye with a swab stick. It is an excellent remedy for corneal opacity and granular lids.

When the eyes are in a chronic state of being watery, they must be treated with astringents.

A good eye bath is a lotion made of equal parts of warm water and poppy decoction.

Another lotion may be made of one and a half-grains of sulphate of zinc and an ounce of distilled water. The eyes should be washed with it, both at night and in the morning.

A wash in a tumblerful of rain water, with a few drops of vinegar or rosewater in it, is also good ; and a cooling lotion is made of eight ounces of rose water and sixteen drops of lemon juice.

A very efficacious remedy for tired or strained eyes is to bathe them early at dawn, in saxifrage, wormwood or sage which has been kept soaked in rose water overnight.

A simple treatment for weak eyes and for children's eyes, resorted to in India, is to burn a cotton wick soaked up to an inch before the end in mustard oil ; to collect the smoke arising from the wick in a silver spoon painted with oil ; to dip a silver or ivory slide in the soot, and pass it along the eyelids.

For inflammation in the hair channels of the eyelashes, called styes, a soothing cure is to sprinkle a little *red oxide of*

mercury (sindhur) or to apply oiled silk. These will heat it and cause a white head to appear. Pull out any hair that might emerge from the boil. With this operation the matter will escape through a little hole on top, and the pain will be relieved.

Lines round the eyes, caused by fatigue and worry, such as wrinkles, crow's feet and puffiness, are warded off by the application of almond oil. The massage should take the form of a gentle tapping with the finger tips, not of stretching the skin or dragging it.

'A fair maiden's transformation into lovely womanhood, when she comes of age, is indicated by the transfer of the restlessness of her feet to her eyes, the orbs whereof keep always on the move,' says an Indian sage. 'When the slow music of time begins to sing a sad song into a woman's ears towards her prime, the flashing of the eyes is then a very good exercise, winking a fascinating one.'

Large eyelashes, it was believed in India, make large eyes. Hence do you see the Indian artist drawing long spears of hair for the eyelashes he paints. And in a text explaining a musical drawing, it is suggested that a trace of warm olive oil nourishes the lashes, making them luxuriously thick, lustrously silken, and darkening them naturally. Mascara is also freely applied, it will make each lash so long that it is seen in full even when the face is turned aside.

To stimulate the growth of the eyebrows, sesame oil, castor oil, or cocoanut oil should be rubbed on them, gently, like an ointment. But eyebrows seldom fall off, because on account of continual friction with the towel, scurf is not allowed to collect on them. And Indian women have, since remote times, preferred thin, very thin eyebrows. To secure this, plucking with tweezers is one method adopted, gently rubbing with a bit of pumice stone, another.

A layer of collyrium or the soot of a lamp, will make the eyes dark and bright. Also *kohl*, made of the sulphide of antimony with Chinese and Indian ink, blackens them besides preserving them against the sun and air, and changes them to moonstones, brilliant, glinting and flashing fire, in the words of Kalidasa: 'as they are weighted over by the eyelids and half close under the deeps of their palaces.'

A simple method of increasing the depth of the eyes is to make the lids blue with the juice of the wild plum. The size of the eyes is increased by drawing a short, fine pencil mark outwards from the corner of the lids where they join. Thus becomes possible that sharpness in the glance which makes the Indian poetess say with pride to her lover


*'My eyes are not eyes, beloved, but arrows of light,
My eyebrows are not eyebrows, but swords for your
destruction'*



'Small ears for a small face ; and small ears also for a big face.'

PUNJABI PROVERB

THE EARS



A great deal of care has always been taken, in India, about the toilet of the ear. The immaculately clad barber, engaged in taking wax out of people's ears, is a familiar figure in later Indian painting. He is a specialist; he does nothing else but clean ears.

A gold or silver scoop, a sort of miniature spoon-like thing, is enjoined in the holy books, to be given as an item of jewellery in the dowry to all young brides. It is fastened on a silken cord around the neck and, with it, women clean their ears every now and then, as it is believed that, with the change of weather from the dry days, the wax swells and may cause deafness. Skill is required in the use of this instrument, because there is a danger, if it is inserted too far, of hurting the delicate mechanism of the ear. And, under no circumstances, should the match-stick be improvised for cleansing the ear by mounting it with a little cotton wool, as is often done.

If the wax has not been cleared for a long time, it is the custom to soften it by having a little warm olive oil poured into the ears. In this way it falls off without any artificial aid. But the best means of keeping the ears clean is to have them regularly syringed by a doctor.

For ear-ache : take a teaspoonful of castor oil or olive oil and heat it by holding it over a candle or a cup of boiling water. Then dip a little wadding in the warm oil and put it in the aching ear. Cover it with another piece of wadding and lie down for a while. This will soothe the ear as the oil has special properties



'Her nose was delicate, with expressive nostrils which palpitated like my heart.'

PUNJABI SONG

'Her nose is sensitive like the nose of a bay mare.'

PUNJABI PROVERB

THE NOSE

A red nose is proverbially connected with indigestion in India, as it is associated with too much drinking in the West. Since the external remedy of applying powder was unknown in India until recently, the only cure resorted to was internal. The coating of powder is to be discouraged, as it is merely a temporary remedy and often sets up local inflammation. A more healthy treatment, well-known in the villages, and especially suited to dry, dusty and rainless climates, is to dissolve salt in a tumbler of warm water and to sniff it up from the palm of the hand.

For a cold in the head it is suggested that the nose should be cleaned thoroughly. Then sniff from a tumblerful of warm water with a teaspoonful of lavender water dissolved in it, and gargle the throat with some more of the mixture, or with warm water and salt. This should be done three or four times a day.

The nostrils are disfigured by an excessive growth within them of the stiff hairs, which ordinarily refine the breath by arresting dust, insects, and other substances that are in the air.

These hairs should not be pulled out with tweezers, because there is a danger of ulceration of the tender inner skin; they should be trimmed with a pair of scissors every now and then.

If the sense of smell is impaired in some way, it should be strengthened by sniffing from a lotion of tepid water to which

a few drops of the essence of peppermint have been added.

A simple remedy for excessive bleeding of the nose, used in India, is to seat the patient in an upright position, and cause him to raise his arms suddenly upwards.





'Her jet black hair poured down her breasts

As though a shaggy yak concealed her gold Mahesh.'

CHANDIDAS, 15th century

THE HAIR

THUS sings one Hindu poet, and he symbolises the preference of all others for long, luxurious, black hair. Whether the choice of dark hair is deliberate is not known, but it would seem that the finest type of tropical beauty possesses long, dark, luxuriant tresses, and the poets have made their feeling for that type a convention

The health of the hair, it has long been recognised in India, depends on the fertility and richness of the soil from which it springs—the effective cleanliness of the scalp and the efficient circulation of the blood underneath. The lustre of the hair depends on the amount of light that is reflected in each particular fibre. The brilliance depends on the oil supply, for each hair is lubricated by the secretion of one or more oil glands connected with the skin by means of a channel which passes under its surface. The absence of the natural oil and the non-application of some artificial oil over the whole length of the hair occasions the dull lack of lustre which is so unsightly



The natural oil comes in contact with the hair at the point where it emerges from the skin. There it tends to dry, being exposed to the air, and it will, in time, fall off, leaving the hair dull and lustreless. Hence the need for brushing the hair, which operation must be practised as a fine art, by so applying the brush as both to remove any dust that may have fallen on the head, and to distribute, evenly and uniformly, the oil throughout its whole length. The comb may be used instead of the brush, but it should never be used, as they say in India, 'like a harrow in a fallow field.'

The belief in the use of artificial oils has been very pronounced in the East, and the manufacture of hair oils is a speciality in India. The following list would afford some idea of the variety of substance, scent and colour that may be obtained in hair oils: the amla; the keora; the almond; the tarphala; the jasmine; the anbari, the clove, the rose; the chambeli; the motia, the molsari; the henna; the kashniz; the orange; the lemon, the cocoanut; the mustard; etc.

All these are, in the characteristically flowing description of their manufacturers, 'not oils, but magical potions, well-known in the seven worlds for their invaluable qualities, for preventing the hair from falling, for darkening it, lengthening it, softening it, for cooling the brain and for strengthening it.' They are all prepared 'scientifically' and you are invited 'to order them and experiment.'

The object of washing the hair is to clean it and to remove the large, scaly cast-off parts of the horny layer of the skin, commonly called scurf and dandruff, which adhere to the scalp or remain entangled in the hair.

There are various vegetable products, barks and berries used for cleansing the hair. The skin of arethas for instance, broken and soaked in water, makes a very good solution for shampoos. A cupful of curdled milk, poured into the hair

and washed, cleans it thoroughly and gives it the silken air of dark, falling water. Lemon juice and water are beneficial if the hair be well-dried before redressing. A nutful of soda is equally effective for a shampoo. If the head is naturally moist, wash with rosemary (a pound to a gallon of water), for, besides cleansing the hair, it strengthens the scalp. A purely fragrant wash may be made of orange flowers or orange peel, jasmine, acacia, rose, tuberose and vanilla, all steeped in the spirit of wine.

These substances should be well rubbed in so that a good lather is produced, the scalp being massaged with the finger tips. The lather should be washed out with tepid water. The hair may then be dried with a towel briskly, and massaged with oil or other favourite application, which removes scurf and stimulates the growth and luxuriance of the hair.

Baldness is prevented by thoroughly removing scurf and gently applying liquid paraffin, as this softens the scalp and encourages the growing hair to force its way through the hair channels. When this has been brought about, an effective massage with some hair oil should be undertaken to promote a vigorous growth of the hair. An old Indian recipe to induce the growth of the hair is to rub the ashes of ivory with goat's milk on the hair. Or, 'having finely powdered the calcined elephant's tusk, one should apply it (on the part affected) then baldness would disappear and the hair grow thick.' (*Ananga Ranga*).

When there is a tendency for the hair to fall, it is due to the lack of calcium in the body. Therefore, a course of calcium is recommended.

An oil shampoo for revitalising the hair, which can be recommended to every one, is a mixture of the old Indian and modern steamer treatment. The oil is heated and poured on to the head, soaking the hair profusely. Then the head is



massaged for ten minutes. If a steamer is not available then hot towels should be placed on the head for fifteen minutes. After this the hair may be washed with a shampoo in the ordinary way.

The hair should generally be massaged for five to ten minutes every day in order to maintain its quality.

The powder of *arbus precatorius*, mixed with honey, on being applied will sufficiently reduce baldness and also promote the outward growth of hair.

Sesame flower together with *Tribulus Lenuginosus* (*Gokhru*), powdered in cow's milk, on being applied for a week, would make the hair long and luxuriant.

Gingelly oil, in which has been boiled *Jatropha Montana* (*Makulaka*) and *Symplocus Racemosa* or *Styrax benzion*, taken internally and applied externally, would make hair long and luxuriant.

The grace and charm that was associated with grey hair in ancient India is highly to be recommended to all those old women of the modern world who make themselves ridiculous trying to look young by dyeing their hair. Greyness may,



*'Last night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness of
black hair.'*

From the Pustho, 19th century

however, be premature, or in patches, brought on by illness ; or it may be caused by the excessive dryness of the roots as a result of the deficient action of the sweat glands ; or by the unusual dryness of the air which evaporates the perspiration before it has moistened the lining of the hair channels, as happens in a tropical or sub-tropical climate like that of India. It is suggested that paraffin be applied. And iron may be taken under doctor's advice, internally, to prevent the hair from becoming grey and to restore it to its original colour, for dark hair contains iron. But no artificial aids can really restore the original colour of the hair and it is only possible to tint it with dyes.

There were various dyes used in ancient India to turn the hair black : walnut shells, boiled leeks, cypress, myrtle and indigo plant. Of these *rasma*, to be had at the grocer's, is the most popular nowadays. A little powder of it may be made into a thick paste and smeared all over the hair.

After the dye has been applied, the hair should be covered with leaves for a few hours and then washed.

The mango blossom, the three *myrobalans*, also the bark of *Terminalia Arjuna* (*Arjuna*) and *Trewia Nudiflora* (*Pindara*) the paste of them should be boiled in gongelly oil. It is known as the black oil and is an excellent dye. Even the feather of a white goose dipped in it would turn black.

The hair of the head, besmeared with *Quercus Infectoria*, long pepper, *Indigoera Tinctoria* (*Neela*) and hay salt, all pounded in fermented rice gruel, would become sufficiently dark in colour.

'She who takes, for one month 64 mashas of *Azadirachta Indica* (*Neem oil*) would gradually have the hair become as black as the bee.' (*Ananga Ranga*).

A good black dye may be made by mixing one drachm of the rust of iron, twelve minims of the oil of rosemary, a pint of



unsweetened strong old ale, in a bottle corked loosely, which is shaken every day for a fortnight and from which the clear portion is carefully decanted after every agitation.

A good darkener may be obtained by mixing one and a half drachms of the sulphuret of potassium and one fluid ounce of distilled water. The hair should be moistened with it. When it is dry, apply a mixture of one and a half drachms of the nitrate of silver and two fluid ounces of distilled water.

A solution of bichloride of tin, diluted largely, followed by a mordant composed of hydro-sulphuret of ammonia, will give a rich golden hue to very pale hair, and a golden brown or auburn tint to darker tresses.

Also, saffron, steeped in rose water will, for a short while, dye hair yellow.

Henna has been used, in India, for light and dark hair, to give an auburn tint from a pale golden to copper red. Being absolutely free from any irritating qualities, it does not injure the scalp or impair the texture of the hair. When mixed with indigo leaves, it gives a much deeper tint, a fine black, like that of a ram's fleece. A tablespoonful of powder is quite sufficient to give a permanent dye. It should be mixed with a pint of water and heated gently over a slow fire, for half an hour. Then it should be stirred, shaken and applied with a brush and left to dry on the hair.

A beehive shell from which the honey has been extracted has been customarily used by Indian women to give a good

shine to black hair. A lemon cut into two and squeezed over the head is supposed to soften the hair and make it sleek.

A depilatory which has been used in India for ages for removing superfluous hair is made with slaked lime and a sixth part of powdered orpiment mixed into a paste with rose water. It is spread on the hair-to-be-removed, and is left on for about five minutes, when it is scraped off with an ivory paper knife. The skin is then bathed in warm water and treated with cold cream to stay the irritation.

Another method for removing the hair on the face is to use scented wax. This is heated, applied to the face and pulled off before too dry. It takes the hair with it. There are also other patent hair removers which can be used quite safely.

Modern sand paper is the most effective instrument for removing hair on the legs.

'Having put the powder of *Plumbi carbonas* (lead Carbonate) in white mustard oil, it should be kept in the sun for a week. Then that (oil) on being applied destroys the superfluous hair of women.

'Calcined conch (*Gasteropoda*), soaked in the juice of the plantain tree for a week, then mixed with orpiment, destroys the superfluous hair of women.' (*Ananga Ranga*).

The ancient Indian way of curling hair was to moisten and oil it and then to shape it in a zig-zag fashion over the forehead and across the head. Also gum tragacanth reduced to the consistency of syrup was soaked in water and applied, after which the hair was set in curls by means of irons.

The ancient Egyptians had a system of permanent wave which was based on the same principle as the South Indian and modern method. Instead of cooking the hair in the electric heater, they cooked it in mud, by applying a kind of



*'Coming out of her bath, she looked like the Goddess
of Beauty out of the Lotus,
Her thin cloth set forth her shining complexion, glistening
like lightning
She sat under a tree which, Vasudeo says, was bursting
with flowers
Her hair dishevelled—she sat there gazing on her beauty
in the mirror.'*

From the Hindi of VASUDEO, Mediaeval period

heated mud pack which was kept on the hair for some hours in the form of a waved cap and then peeled off, leaving the perfect crinkly coiffure. As the modern method of permanent waving is fairly inexpensive nowadays, the old methods are only of interest to the experimentalist.

Lichen seeds, boiled in water till the water is reduced to half its original quantity, then strained and scented, may be applied to keep hair in curl. Also, white wax perfumed with a favourite scent.

The hair is usually parted in the middle in India, for Indian women are blessed with small regular features. But side partings were known as early as Buddhist times when the art of the coiffure seems, from the sculptures of Sanchi, to have been at its zenith.

The ideal coiffure, nowadays, generally seen only among our peasant women, is a lovely head with hair modelled so as to heighten the forehead, the scarlet kumkum across the parting, and flowers on the joora, embellished, with the appropriate jewellery on festive occasions. Witness, for example, some of the Ajanta hair styles, so unselfconscious in their grace, yet executed with a sensibility which is the equal of the very best in our modern period.

The plaits so much favoured in our country become the younger women better than the old, and with certain kinds of dress such as the *kurta* and *salwar* in northern India, they are the only appropriate style, specially because it is easier to embellish them with colourful tassels.





*'When she puts henna on her hands and
dives in the river*

*'One would think one saw fire twisting
and running in the water.'*

DILSOZ, 18th century.

THE HANDS

THE convention of colouring palms and finger tips with the red tint furnished by the dried and powdered leaves of henna is an old one, dating back to long before the classical age. The popularity which this practice has enjoyed in India is due to the fact that, in a world of strong colours, only a vivid scarlet can charm and relieve the eye, resting so often and so fondly on the limbs with which the day's work is done. And, everywhere in this country, well tended hands and nails are regarded as the outward and visible signs of luxury.

The Indian peasant housewife who, unlike her urban sister, uses her hands more frequently in the exercise of her domestic work, has the advantage of starting off, early in the morning, with a task which helps to keep the hands silken and soft. She beats the curds to get butter and during the operation the grease sticks to her hands. And there could be no better natural treatment for rough hands than the ingredients of this grease, which are curds and the cream of boiled milk. For, unlike other portions of the skin, where perspiration just trickles through the pores, the backs of the hand and the palm have very few oil ducts, having, instead, a large number of sweat ducts which open directly on to the surface and through which the perspiration emerges unchecked on the skin.

The fards used to soften the hands in India are the same as those used for the face. Massage with a mixture of bran,



oatmeal and almond, or honey and almond, or olive oil or any of the other Upatanas (see page 60) is recommended for use, instead of soap, when the skin has been injured or stained by housework or cracked and chapped by constant dipping in cold water. If the ingredients of the Upatanas are not mixed in anticipation of the massage, then they can be applied separately. For instance, smear the hand thoroughly with olive oil or pure almond oil, then rub it into the skin, till the oil is absorbed. The gentle application of the Upatana should then be continued till all the meal is rolled off the skin. The process takes some time as every particle of meal must be removed. But the result will repay the effort, for the skin emerges, white and soft like a velvety cool flower.

Oatmeal cakes may be made as a toilet adjunct for the hands by thoroughly mixing four ounces of honey, one ounce of powdered gum, the yolk of three eggs and four ounces of butter, and sifting this mixture in seven or eight ounces of oatmeal. The cakes may be scented as desired.

Another unguent for whitening and softening the hands may be made by thoroughly powdering two ounces of pure white wax and four ounces of the oil of sweet almonds together. Perfume with five drops of the otto of roses. A variation of this is to melt together over a slow fire, in a glazed, lined earthen-ware pot, two ounces of refined white wax, two ounces of the oil of sweet almonds, two ounces of cocoa butter. Stir and cool.



'Tell me, are three baskets of saffron enough
To colour your breasts and your arms and your face?'

Anon

Lemon has a whitening effect and cleans the nails better than anything else besides preventing the skin from growing over the nails. Eggs, butter, bran and starch, may each be used to touch the fingers and to give them a delicate shape.

Warts can be cured by licking them first thing in the morning, as that is supposed to remove the scurf which may have become lodged in them during the night ; and it prevents the scurf from coming into actual contact with the warts when the hair is being brushed.

Another very efficacious remedy is to rub the white fur lining of the shell of ripe broad beans on the hands. Dandelion juice may be used in the same way, and the juice of the sunflower which can be found by breaking the stem near the root

Chilblains seldom occur in India, as the majority of women work outdoors and get plenty of exercise. A remedy suggested in Kashmir is to bathe them in the morning in a decoction of walnut leaves, afterwards rubbing them over with the spirits of camphor and powdering them with 10 grams of *salicylate of bismuth* and 9 grams of starch. To rub with alum dissolved in water is another powerful remedy

In a land where the value of professional skill is highly estimated, manicuring is left to the barber's wife. The process of manicuring in her hands, if rather long-winded, is simple. She washes the nails in warm water, rinses and dries them well. She presses back the skin at the root of the nails with a piece of ivory with a spade-like edge, and cuts it in one piece with a pair of manicure scissors. She then cuts the nails, leaving them pointed or rounded according to the taste of the individual who is under treatment, or according to the shape of the fingers. If the fingers are short, broad and stumpy, she prefers to cut the nails at an almost straight edge, if they are of medium length and thickness, she rounds the ends of

the nails ; if they are long, she trims them to a point with great artistry. She files down and smoothes the edge of the nail now. Then she polishes the nail, bending the finger on the palm of the hand by rubbing briskly. This is done not only to make the nails shine, but, presumably, also to improve the blood supply, to strengthen their growth and to massage the skin at their roots. Finally, she pastes the moistened powder of henna on the palms. When the fist is full of the stuff, the nails are treated. The hands are left to dry for an hour overnight. They are washed later and dipped in warm olive oil. This gives a permanent red tint for two or three months.

Indian women also use myrrh, and leaves of red roses steeped in vinegar to colour the nails pink.

To keep hands young and smooth, it has been the practice to take a walnut in each hand and rub it gently and steadily during spare moments. This gives the necessary exercise, keeps the hands supple and frees them from wrinkles and lines. And the various mudras from the classical dances of India are recommended for real grace





*"These girls are sorcerers with their feet
reddened by scented lac."*

KALIDASA, 4th cent. A.D.

THE FEET

THE care of the feet has been carried to perfection in India, as may be obvious from the ceremonial law relating to footwear, which demands that the feet should be washed every time they have been in contact with the shoes. It is obligatory, for instance, to appear unshod at the door of a house, and then enter so that not the slightest particle of dust may be carried in.

'Ugly feet, ugly face,' is a proverb constantly on the tongues of the villagers, and often you will see them seated before the barber-manicurist under the banyan tree, patiently submissive. The treatment is skilled, if simple.

The pedicurist first chisels back the skin that covers the lower part of the nail, then cuts it off with an indigenous instrument which is the original model of the European cuticle knife. Next he attends to the nail, cutting it so that it is not pointed, as is the custom to cut fingernails, but straight across with a chisel-edged instrument. Finally he pares down, with another chisel-shaped instrument an inch broad at the edge, the thick skin on the heel and the sole, so skillfully that he removes all the dead skin, even though he may look as if he is doing harm.

To secure symmetrically shaped toes and rosy nails, it is recommended that the morning should be started with a bare-foot walk on green grass while the dew is on it.

The feet should be effectively washed during the bath, the accumulating dirt being rubbed off from the ankles with a



pumice stone. The space between the toes and the toe nails should be cleaned with the fingers.

After the skin has been vigorously dried, it is customary to file away the corns with a knife or a razor, for the thickened skin over the horny layer which is the corn, has been softened by contact with the water and is easily scraped off.

A piece of rag, dipped in turpentine, should be applied to the soft corns for a week or two, twice a day ; or a plaster containing India-rubber which sticks and removes the horny layer. A fresh rose leaf worn on the corn will cure it in its most obstinate and difficult moods. A paste of garlic powdered in vinegar will kill the corn gradually.

It was the custom in ancient India to colour the palms of the feet red with lac. Nowadays, the moistened powder of henna is used to secure a permanent tint for the feet as for the hands.

'Shoes are made to fit the feet, not feet made to fit the shoes,' is an Indian adage which might be remembered by all who go in for 'ready-made' footwear. For comfort and health shoes should be preferred to boots in cold climates. Sandals and chapals are the chosen wear in India. And the



wise go without socks or stockings, thus avoiding tender feet, which are caused by excessive moisture, due to perspiration of the outer horny layer of the skin, and the sodden skin pressing on the tender, sensitive layer underneath. Shoes should be put out to air after use. And they should be treated with a little mustard oil if they are hard anywhere, or if they pinch and cause blisters.

Perspiring feet should be bathed, morning and night, in soda and water, and covered with a powder made of pulverised alum and tannin.

Blisters should be punctured and painted with a saturated solution of tannic acid, or dusted with a powder of boric acid and starch mixed in equal parts

Sores on the feet are always due to a low state of health, for which a change of air is the only remedy.

Chilblains are caused by the bad circulation of the blood. A popular remedy is to apply a mixture of an ounce of vinegar, half of turpentine, and an egg, as a sort of liniment, every night. Massage with alum and water, or with cocoanut oil is also very effective. For tired and aching feet, bathe them in hot water with a little salt dissolved in it

Beautiful feet have been described by a poet as with insteps so arched that the water flows under them.





*'When in your floating robe,
Woven with red silk and golden,
In your floating robe
Held around your hips
By a brodered belt,
Showing all curves
Of your reckless body
You pass me by,
I feel come to me
A wild and mad desire.'*

From the Burmese of
ASMAPUR, 18th century.

CLOTHES

THE character of Indian dress does not seem to have altered much since the time of Alexander's invasion of India. For Strabo, the Greek chronicler, describes Indians as wearing 'loose garments of white linen and muslin, dresses worked with gold and precious stones and flowered robes'. And those flowered and variegated robes are still worn in India.

From the sculpture of Sanchi, Amravati and Khajuraho, the Indian woman's robe has been light, falling in beautiful free folds from the shoulders to below the knees. There are no unhealthy restrictions in the shape of collars about it, and nothing calculated to impede the free circulation of the blood. The dress is short and facilitates the free movement of the body. Above the waist it takes the form of a light muslin wrapper which half hides, half reveals the body like a 'wet drape', in a way beautifully described by the

poet of the *Rig-Veda*, when he refers to the seductive charm of:

'Nrity, a dancing girl, (who) carefully putting on her person vestments to attract the eyes of all, slightly bares her breasts.'

Sometimes the wrapper takes the form of an elaborately worked silken veil which falls backward, over the shoulders down to the waist, or passed twice over the head crosswise, part of it being wrapped under the right breast round the body. These veils were, in the old days as now, richly embroidered and interwoven with gold and ornaments with floral and animal designs.

'How shall I praise thy robe with gay flamingoes gleaming ?'

KALIDASA, 4th century.

'Her two silken garments, white as the form of ambrosia, with the pair of geese painted in yellow on their hem'

BANA, 4th century.

There are a variety of these adornments for the head.



besides the heavy silk ones described above ; the thick *phulkaris*, made of red cotton cloth, diapered in coloured silks, either in geometrical designs covering the whole field, or scattered with flower motifs all over ; and the Kashmir shawls, the black printed cottons ; and the gauzes so easily stirred by the wind.

The close-fitting bodice, the *choli*, appears to have been worn in India some centuries before Christ, and tunics of various hues began to be tailored long before the time of Vatsayana, tailoring being described in the *Kama-Sutra* as one of the sixty-four fine arts. Nowadays, it is varied either with a tight-fitting blouse or a silk shirt.

The lower part of the body was covered in early Indian art with a *dhoti* (waist cloth) falling very little below the knee, clinging closely to the loins and giving them an exquisite shape like that of wine jars. The modern *sari* is a variation of the *dhoti*, which is still worn in its original form in Central and Southern India. The skirts and trousers also date back to the remote past, being freely used by the dancers of the Classical age. And *salwars* and tight pyjamas, as well as skirty wide pyjamas have survived in Northern India. They were made of glittering coloured satins, embroidered with floral and animal designs in gold and silver thread, sometimes woven into the fabric, at other times executed in a chain stitch.

The scarf and the handkerchief have been ceremonially given in India as gifts on all possible occasions. They are made in various sizes, from the ordinary one foot square to a yard square, in coloured silks and satins or in cotton and muslin, embroidered in vivid designs or just decorated on the borders with a cross stitch.

Apollonius of Tyana describes the people of India as wearing sandals made of the fibre of papyrus. But silk, velvet,



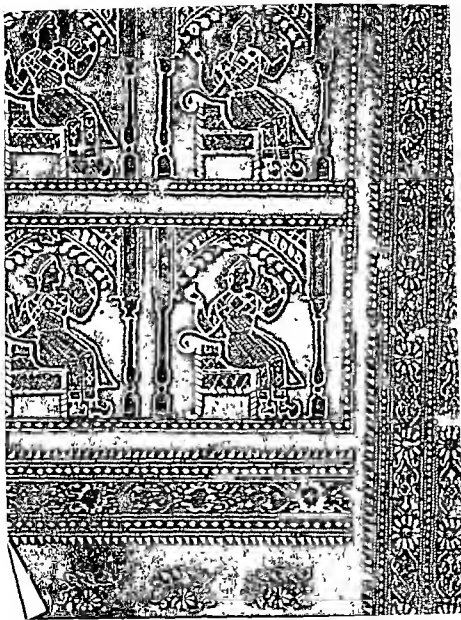
the bud of flame in which men-moths get their wings singed and die in a twinkling

BHARTIHARI In *Sringara Sataka*

'As a young and beautiful woman, adorned with golden necklace and betel leaves and flowers, goes out to meet her lover clothed in coloured silks, so the whole of this earth is decorated with woman's loveliness, as though with a silken garment, agreeable to the touch, variegated with the arrangement of different colours and pleasing to the eye'

Inscription in the Temple of Surya,
Malwa 5th cent A D

Block by special arrangement with Marg
Magazine, Adelphi Queen's Road, Bombay.





leather, wood, silver and gold were freely used to make shoes since Epic times. Silver and gold are used either as thin plates, or as thread mounted on velvet or leather and wrought in various intricate designs.

Different clothes are generally worn according to the different seasons. The poet Kalidasa has beautifully described the feeling behind the changes in costume at different seasons.

'In the hot breathless summer,' he says, 'the veils drop one by one, from the masses of dark hair, from the moving shoulders, the breasts and the thighs which were entangled, and now women's garments are mingled with fresh jasmine their haunches are held in gold.'

During the rainy season, 'the girls make themselves ready to be desirable, with mastic upon their mouths. They brighten their ears with coloured blossom. They set new pearls about their nipples, and let fall their hair..... a white garment strains their haunches, a pleasant and irresistible shade at their dividing, a god-like attraction.'

With the autumn, woman has wrapped herself in the warm folds of silk, even as 'the night, a young girl, close upon ripeness, has taken a thousand stars out of the jewel casket, and comes to us in a robe of stainless light'.

And when the winter comes, she 'hides her breasts as if in shame, for the time of saffron unguents, of moon bright garlands, has passed away. There are no more shell bracelets, and robes lie heavy upon breasts and haunches. This is no time for coloured belts and gold cords and rings chiming like bird song on feet as light as lilies'.

But, with the season of dews a feeling of ease comes over the body. Women 'make ready to celebrate the time of dews, they circle their throats with chosen tissue, they mould their haunches in a coloured silk and load their hair with blossoms of red mango'.

Spring frees the heart, making it throb with a new rhythm 'Life is in all things, pearls shake upon high breasts, and the perfumed breath is shaken. Girdles are troubled upon the flanks of women. Tissues gilt with the sap of saffron lie upon breasts, and haunches fill a silk dyed with the red Kusumha. This is the vaulting time of love. . . .'

Imbued in these lyrical descriptions of the influence of the seasons on clothes, is the poetry of the colours which vary according to the seasons, and which is only represented in the paintings by the masters. For instance, the colour of clothes during spring is yellow, Basanti, and that of summer the lime green which resembles the tender pipal tree. Also, the colours of dresses worn during certain ceremonies is characteristic, as the ruby red of the clothes of the bride.

Most of the motifs of ancient costumes are found in the variations of modern women's dress in India, as in the sari, the dhoti, the choli, the kurta, the pyjama and the dupatta.





*'She appears like a flash of lightning
Crowns of gold with rubies and dia-
monds set and countless pearls,
Many a row of pearls is gleaming,
Many an anklet twinkling,
Many a wreath of gems on her neck,
Diamonds and rubies threaded fair !
A slender waist is decked with bells,
Heart-ensnaring the ring in her nose !
Heavy tresses braided well
Where strings of jewels are woven in,
Beautiful rubies swung in her ears,
Bracelets yield delight,
Here there is worn a silken robe,
There are folds that make it fair.'*

ANON, 8th cent. A.D.

JEWELLERY

IT would take an encyclopaedia to describe all the ornaments with which Indian women decorate themselves. Each century added to the last in fresh design and material so that the richness and profusion of ancient Indian precious stones and jewellery is amazing. 'How heavy they are,' exclaims a poet, and then proceeds to justify them by saying 'But they have been woman's armour. How many poets they have not hurt !'

There are several different ornaments for each part of the body made in gold or silver. We shall only mention the principal decorations.

Ornaments worn on the forehead : These are generally worn just below the parting of the hair on top of the forehead. The commonest is a star about an inch in diameter. In

The possession of a perfect ruby is a meritorious act—as meritorious as the performance of an Asvamedha sacrifice. It leads to wealth, success and long life.

Medicines of which diamond is a component are like ambrosia. Their use will impart adamantine strength to the limbs.

'An 'emerald is the most auspicious gem'

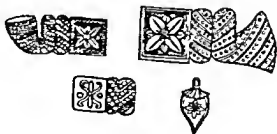
From Sanskrit texts, Vedic period

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classical Sanskrit it is called 'fastened leaf', because in the golden age it was fashioned as a leaf and stuck on the forehead. Now it is popularly known as *bindi* or *tika* meaning the mark of the gods, and standing for any gold ornament worn on the forehead, whether it be a single round one, set with precious stones and fixed on or glued to the centre of the forehead, or several ornaments hanging down from the parting of the hair to the spot between the eyes. Sometimes it has a radiated centre of about two inches in diameter, set in gold and richly ornamented with small pearls, to which various chains are attached, helping to support it in its position in the centre of the forehead. A triple or quadruple row of pearls passes up the centre of the line where the hair is parted, the hair being kept very flat. The centre piece is composed of precious stones, such as topaz, emerald, ruby, amethyst. It is said 'to augment the light of the face as the pole star heightens the lustre of the moon'.

Ornaments for the ear The most popular of these is the *Karn-phul*, the ear-flower. It is fixed into the lobe of



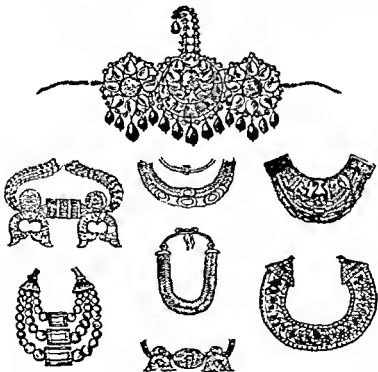


the ear, both by the usual mode of piercing, and by a chain of gold passing over the ear, so that the chain might bear its weight and that of its appendage, *Jhumka*, which would otherwise cause the lobe of the ear to extend downwards. The *Jhumka* is a bell-shaped ornament of solid gold, about an inch in diameter, beautifully filigreed. From its edge are suspended small rods of gold, each furnished with one or two, or a hundred pearls, or garnets, or slowly swinging pendants. In the upper part of the *Jhumka* is a small perforated stud, sometimes ornamented, through which is inserted a ring about the thickness of a fine knitting needle and not less than half an inch in diameter, it having previously passed through the ear on the part which is usually pierced. The ring is made of the purest gold. It is so pliant that the little hook (made at one end by bending the wire fixed into a minute loop or eye and twisted at the other end) may be straightened at pleasure by means of a nail. Besides the *Jhumka*, which is fixed to the lower end of the *Karn-phul*, goldrings of various sizes are also worn in the other lobes of the ear.

Ornaments for the nose The nose is decorated only on ceremonial occasions, with two different ornaments, the *Nath* and the *Bulak*. The former is usually a large ring passed through the left nostril, consisting of a gold wire as thick as a knitting needle, with the usual hook and eye, and furnished at the centre with several garnets, pearls, etc., seven or more separated by a thin plate of gold, having generally serrated or scalloped edges, and being fixed transversely upon the wire

which passes through the centres, as well as through the garnets and pearls. The common diameter is an inch and a half, but it has been a very effective noose for snaring the hearts of lovers.

The *Bulak* is a nasal trinket, flat, with a couple of eyes at its narrowest part. It is appended to the middle of the septum or central cartilage of the nose, by means of a gold screw



passed through an orifice in it. It kisses the upper lip of the wearer, with its pendent of pearls and precious stones, and always excites a good deal of envy in the poet's heart.

Ornaments for the neck : In ancient India a heavy string of gold beads, a kind of collar called *Kantha* or *Kanthi* was generally worn. The large necklaces called *Lalantika* (dalliers or bewitching garlands, because they dally between the breasts of women), are now more usually worn. *Manka* or *Lacha*, a necklace of gold beads, is worn tight round the neck like a collar. *Chandanhar* is a sandal rosary. The *Face of Kanchenjunga*, a *Kantha* which comes from the Himalayas, expresses the spirit of the steep heights where the Gods reside and which is the aspiration of the human soul. *Champakali* is made of separated rings, each intended to represent the un-blown flower of champā (*Michelia Champaca*) to the number of forty to eighty or more, strung together. It is worn so loose that it may reach half way down the bosom. The mounting is of gold or silver according to the means of the wearer, the rings or flower beads are either crystals set in foils, chiefly white, or precious stones of one colour throughout the ornament; or it is wholly composed of gold. *Do-lari*, *Tin-lari*, *Char-lari*, *Panch-lari*, *Chai-lari*, *Sat-lari* are necklaces from two to seven strings. *Hansli* is a solid collar of pure gold, or silver, easily put on or off. It is square in front under the chin for several inches, tapering off gradually, and terminating at the end with a small knob. *Tawiz* is a silver or gold case enclosing a formula of mysticism or magic, written on some animal or vegetable substance, strung over a black silk thread and worn round the neck, superstitiously, to repel disease and to ward off evil.

Ornaments for the arms : The chief of these is *Bazuband*, a trinket adorned with semi-circular ornaments made hollow but filled with melted resin. Its ends are furnished with loops of gold, and when set with precious stones it is called *Nav-ratan*. A circular bangle of gold or silver, designed as a



snake coiling round and round, symbolises the universe by its name, *Anant*, endless.

Ornaments for the wrist : The most common form is a succession of strings and beads or precious stones creating the effect which has been aptly described as 'a laughter of gems.' *Kara* is a ring worn on the wrist, it is of solid gold, massive in effect, commonly hexagonal or octagonal, of equal thickness throughout and terminated by a knob at each end, designed as a lion's or a bison's head, with gems for the eyes. It is of pure gold, for only when gold has been burnt and can be twisted like a leaf, they say, does it become worthy of carrying a gem or of being enamelled and of being worn on the delicate wrists of women. *Paurchian*, the flower of the Ak, is a bracelet of small pointed prisms of solid silver or hollow gold filled with resin, each about the size of a very large barley corn, and having a ring soldered to its bottom. These prisms are strung upon black silk, as close as the pointed or rounded ends will admit, in three or four parallel rows and then fastened. *Churrian* are bangles, or rings of gold or of silver or sealing wax, ornamented with various coloured tinsel. The glass bangles glistening with all their colours on a woman's arms is a sight which only the most liquid language can describe.



Ornaments worn on the fingers : *Angulhis* are rings of various sorts and sizes, worn on any finger. They are generally of gold, those of silver being considered mean. *Arsi* is a ring worn on the thumb of the left hand, a small looking-glass about the size of a penny being fixed upon the hollow gold cup at its centre. The mirror should be of gold, but glass is set for economy. A recent innovation is to use the hollow of the *Arsi* for keeping scent. Then the mirror can be lifted as a lid. *Challa* worn on the fingers is a ring about the fifth of an inch broad, very thin, and for the most part with, bended edges.

Ornaments worn round the waist and loins : The most remarkable girdles and zones were worn in ancient India. There was no female without a belt of several strings of beads in addition to a broad, embroidered belt set with precious stones.

Ornaments worn on the ankles or feet : One is *Paizeb* consisting of heavy rings of silver resembling a horse's curb chain, set with a fringe of spherical bells, all of which tinkle at every motion of the limb. A ring of gold or silver, called *Kara*, solid or hollow from within, is worn above the ankle. The sound it produces during the movement of the feet somewhat controls the music of the *Ghungrus*, bells or anklets,

'that jingle on women's reddened feet and recall the chattering of swans beside the red lotus.'

A ring called *Anual* is worn on the great toe. Then there are also rings worn round the other toes and attached along each side of the foot to the *Paizeb*, all calculated to lift the feet from their lowly position to the shape of the much adored red lotus.





'Even now

*She is present to me on her bed,
Balmed with the exhalation of a
flattering musk,*

*Rich with the curdy essence of
sandal ;*

*Girl with eyes dazing as the
seeded wine.*

*Showing as a pair of gentle
nut-hatches*

*Kissing each other with their
bills, each hidden*

*By turns within a little grasping
mouth.'*

CHAURAS, 1st cent A D

PERFUMES

THE legendary reputation of Indian perfumes is sustained if we contemplate the variety of scents manufactured and used in the country

All scents were ascribed a divine origin in India, but it is fairly certain that men began to make them as early as 1500 years before Christ, columns of magic smoke being fairly common in the Vedic sacrificial ceremonies

One of the commonest uses of perfume in those days was as incense for the altar. There were seven propitiatory scents: Styrax,

Indian aud, and olbion, male incense and moor coriander, white myrtle and non-odoured ledanon. A mixture of myrrh, white resin, sulphur, salt and rice was burnt in incensers, and is spoken of as a very good disinfectant, besides being ascribed the qualities that it strengthens the memory and renders concentration easy. Various spices were also used as perfumes, because they were supposed to impart elasticity to mind and body and to purify the air of one's surroundings.

Rose water and the water of keora must have been distilled quite early, for we find mention of them in the Epics.

The process of distillation seems to have remained the same through the ages. The plants, enclosed in a wire basket, are placed in a metal sill, covered with water, and heated over a naked fire. The mixture of steam and essential oil vapour passes through a tube, cooled with surrounding water, in which it condenses and by which the essential oil is separated from the water by means of a tap funnel.

Attars, myrrhs and balsams were obtained from scraping off the odorous gum as it exuded in tears from the barks of various plants, or by squeezing flowers soaked in oil.

And the use of perfume has been raised to a fine art. For, there are perfumes for different hours of the day, there are perfumes to suit different dresses; there are fragrances meant to be used by different types of women, the types being determined by considerations of colour, build, character and age. So that perfumes are supposed to reflect personality. But the use of certain perfumes is supposed to heighten the feeling for various seasons, so that they reflect the moods of nature. For instance, there is the haunting, heavy scent which reproduces the smell of the earth, after rain so beloved of those who have to wait breathlessly for months for the cool water to pour down from heaven.

The cool attar of *Keora* is a well-known perfume for a summer morning. It goes with summer dresses and best adorns a blonde slim form of reflective temperament.

The rich attar of roses is suited to mid-day, goes well with velvet and reflects to advantage a vivacious, dark brown face which is proportionately full.

The delicate attars of *Motia* and *Chambels* are suited to the shades of the afternoon and evening, violet, blue or green dresses. And they become mature women of thirty or forty

* The fascinating aroma of *Molsary* is subtly conducive to rest in the tense, heavy Indian summer. It goes with rustling silks and evokes the proper atmosphere for the love of newly-wedded youthful couples.

The attar of *Kasturi* is appropriate for the hours of work, and should be smeared on yellow or orange robes. It is especially suited to men and women who profess the arts which require deep meditation.

The attar *Champa* is a perfume for the open air and the garden. It has a faint hint of the blossoming rose about it, the same kind of undertone that the cowslips have, and is young and innocent though deeply charged with charm.

The attar of *Henna* is a sports scent. It is the quintessence of all that goes to provoke laughter and the rich, warm happiness of wild, free movement in the games of love.

The attar *Fitna* goes with highly emotional natures, colourful and exciting, promising the intensity of passion and a power to charm that leaves behind a vivid sense of the shortness of time and a disturbed heart.

The attar *Saffron* is intoxicating in the extreme and evokes an ecstasy like that produced by red wine.

The attar *Lotus* has a classical reputation in India, symbolising like the scent of the flower after which it is named, the continuity of life. It is particularly associated with birth, standing for a chalice or a casket enclosing the hidden and invisible potentialities of a face not yet manifest in a material form.

The attar *Jasmin* goes with frail, sylph-like forms or cool summer evenings and has a staying power that may lilt the person whom it decorates from soft sighs to a stilled rapture.

The attar *Suhag* is a scent used in marriage ceremonies.

The attar *Pantiz* is a gay and naughty perfume with an active and tingling freshness.

The attar *Musk-i-Ambar* is a soft and subtle perfume, for the gentle person, who is sensitive and kind.

The attar *Bed-Mushk* evokes a vague and tenuous emotion like that aroused by flowing water or music or any pure form, a dream or a hallucination shimmering with a faint uneasiness.

Other attars of various hues and scents from the tantalisingly striking to the softly evasive and mysteriously affecting may be chosen according to individual taste which differs according to different racial temperament.

The ancient Indian woman applied her perfume discreetly and cunningly, on the lobes of the ear, on the eyebrows, on the palms of the hand, to the clothes and to the different parts of the body with an art which every modern woman must exercise her ingenuity to discover if she seeks to give expression to her character.

GLOSSARY OF MEDICINAL TERMS

Talliennoe
Costus Speciosus
Arachis
Placourtia Calaphracta
Nelumbium Speciosum
Meisua Roxburghii
Butea frondosa
Tradirachia Indica
Sweetia Chiretta
Icorus Calamus
Emplocos Racemosa
Bombax Malabaricum
Phytalis flexuosa
Withania Somnifera
Saussurea Auriculata
Gmelina Arborea
Calotropis Giganta
Sida Cordifolia
Ichno Carpus
Fekites Frutescens
Mimosa Pudica
Kushlapara (sans)

Kushlapist
Nothadara

Sindhur
Tribulus Lenuginosus
Tribulus Terrestris
Eutropha Montana
Terminalia Arjuna
Trevisia Nudiflora
Indigofero Tinctori
Allium Sepa
Allium Solivum
C. riandrum Salivum
Balsamodendron Myrrh
Myrtus Communis
Sulphur

Chalmooogra Oil
 Sanskrit Pushkara
 Ground nut
 Tahspatri
 White lotus
 Nag keshar
 Sans Palasha
 Murgosa Neem Tree
 Sans Bhunimba
 Sans Vacha
 Styrax Benzoin
 Silk cotton tree

{ Sans Ashwagandha
 Sans Pushkara kushta
 Sans Kashmiri or Si riparni
 Sans Arka
 Sans Bala

{ Sans Sariva
 Sans Lujala
 Persian term for powder Mer-
 curous Chloride
 Persian term for Zinc Oxide
 Persian term for Ammonium
 Chloride
 Red Oxide of Mercury

{ Sans Gokhru
 Sans Makulaka
 Sans Arjuna
 Sans Pindara
 Sans Neela
 Onion
 Garlic
 Danta
 White resin
 White Myrtle
 Gandhak